

UNWANTED GUESTS: BLACK WOMEN WHO CONTEMPLATED AND THEN  
VOLUNTARILY TERMINATED THEIR NON-FACULTY EMPLOYMENT AT  
PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

BY

JOVAUGHN BARNARD

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Policy Studies  
in the Graduate College of the  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2015

Urbana, Illinois

Doctoral Committee:

Assistant Professor Denice Hood, Chair  
Clinical Professor Sandra Nettles  
Professor William Trent  
Associate Professor Assata Zerai

### **Abstract**

This study explored the gendered racism experienced by Black women at predominantly White institutions of higher education. To provide deeper insight, into Black women's contemplation of leaving PWIs, multiple data collection tools were utilized to construct this exploratory qualitative narrative research study. For data collection a survey, two phone interviews, and a reflective prompt were utilized. The theoretical lenses which guided this research were Critical Race Theory, Africana Womanism, and Historical Womanist. The WHO Healthy Workplace theoretical framework was also used to stimulate discussion as it pertains to the participants' physical work environment, psychosocial work environment, personal health resources, and enterprise community. This research was able to give voice to a silenced and marginalized group who may have remained silent while enduring their discomfort and therefore, their stories may not have been heard in any other intentional manner outside of this study. This research was also able to provide recommendations to hiring units in institutions of higher education, especially at predominantly White institutions, to Black women in the field or thinking about entering the field of higher education, and to the graduate preparatory programs who are responsible for preparing aspiring student affairs professionals.

## Acknowledgements

Of course I felt the presence of my ancestors pushing me.  
Each day I awake, I feel them flowing through my veins.  
I felt their eagerness to push me towards greater things.  
Wanting me to leave a legacy for future descendants to recognize,  
learn from, and expand upon, and not just fantasize.  
That kept me going and deterred me from quitting.  
It was they, who helped me with the inspiration to find a topic that was fitting.  
A topic to share, that I looked forward to submitting.  
My ancestors are what pushed me to complete;  
I was going to finish what I started without defeat.  
Without them there would be no me;  
Without their presence, protection, and guidance there would be no completion of this degree.

In addition to the love and gratitude I have for my ancestors, I also want to thank my mother, Yvonne Spencer. I love and appreciate her. She has been with me during every step of the way. In fact, after leaving Illinois, I was with her in my hometown of Annapolis, Maryland while writing each word found in this dissertation and through many other milestones towards obtaining my Ph.D. It is important to also take the time to extend my gratitude and appreciation to my other family members and friends. I also want to thank the women who participated in this study. Without their willingness to participate and share their stories this study would only be a concept.

I am sincerely grateful for Dr. Denice Hood, my advisor and dissertation chair, for her direction and assistance throughout this process. I am thankful for all that she has taught me and

has done for me. If I were to ever become an advisor and dissertation chair to someone in the future, I can only hope to be as patient, positive, and helpful as she. I also want to thank my committee members Dr. William Trent, Dr. Sandra Nettles, and Dr. Assata Zerai for all the time and energy they invested. Without my vision in conjunction with the valuable input, feedback, and tokens of knowledge from these four individuals, *Unwanted Guests: Black Women Who Contemplated and Then Voluntarily Terminated Their Non-Faculty Employment at Predominantly White Institutions of Higher Education* would not have been the same.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	16
CHAPTER 3: METHODS.....	49
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS.....	62
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS.....	109
CHAPTER 6: THEORETICAL DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	123
REFERENCES.....	147
APPENDIX A: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter .....	155
APPENDIX B: Email That Contains the Consent Form and the Questionnaire.....	156
APPENDIX C: Semi-Structured Protocol for the First Phone Interview.....	162
APPENDIX D: Semi-Structured Protocol for the Second Phone Interview.....	165
APPENDIX E: Reflective Prompt.....	168

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

On February, 22, 2015 I was looking through some of my reflective papers I wrote while in my student affairs program at Iowa State University. I stumbled across my last paper and was struck by what I wrote.

I am glad to be a part of such an innovative and unique field. It is fascinating that a field I knew nothing about before the spring of my last year of my undergraduate collegiate experience has become my career. I always knew I wanted to work in a helping profession, which is why I decided to pursue a Bachelor's of Science in Psychology, a Bachelor's of Arts in Humanities, and a minor in Counseling. Towards the end of my time at Nova Southeastern University I started to look at career choices that would complement my undergraduate majors and minor. While researching I stumbled upon the field of higher education and student affairs. I am delighted that I found this hidden gem.

I was surprised because looking back over those words and the rest of the paper really demonstrated just how naïve I was just before graduation in May 2011. I learned a significant amount while in graduate school at Iowa State University. I learned about student development, trends in student affairs, the organization of higher education, and social justice issues. More importantly I learned about who I was and what I wanted to become. I attribute a significant amount of my growth and development to Iowa State University. A lot has happened since I wrote those words back in 2011. I now look back and begin to question; did my educational and professional experiences at Iowa State University really prepare me for what working in this field would be like for a Black woman? In other words I understood student development, what it was like to work in particular institutional types, what the typical daily experience could be for professionals in specific roles on campuses, and what types of challenges I may have to help students work through while working in a particular unit. Iowa State University was successful in teaching me as it pertains to that understanding. I was even aware of the identities which are privileged and oppressed on campus. I was well aware that being Black and a woman were not

only my most salient identities but they also faced systematic oppression in a society which has White males situated on top of the gender and racial hierarchy. I understood the challenges Black students faced on the campus of this predominantly White university. After going through my student affairs program I knew how to better explain the issues Black students faced at PWIs. I could support them, but never saw how the same spaces they need help navigating can also be a place I too could run into problems at as an academic professional. There seems to be this perception that the Black women who work as professionals in higher education can encounter a space of acceptance rather than discrimination. Even my words, a few years ago, almost paints a utopian picture of student affairs. However this perception seems to be a stark difference from reality, especially for myself and the other women represented in this study.

One could ask why Black women, in light of the history of the United States, documented blatant disparities in education, and recent acts of violence and discrimination targeting the Black race, can even gravitate to a career in student affairs, particularly at a PWI. That question could be answered in a plethora of ways. I know for me there were a few reasons which contributed to me becoming a student affairs practitioner.

After being constantly encouraged by my mother and maternal grandmother to further my education, I arrived on campus as a first generation college student. In 2006, I left the public housing neighborhood in Annapolis, Maryland I called home for the first eighteen years of my life. I was set to embark upon a path that will allow me to obtain more knowledge and be able to make a difference in the lives of others. This led me to Fort Lauderdale-Davie, Florida where I attended Nova Southeastern University. After being involved in student organizations and holding leadership roles on campus I was faced with a defining question: What am I going to do after I complete my undergraduate studies?

I considered applying for graduate programs in counseling psychology, industrial organizational psychology, and other fields related to psychology. While meeting with a former supervisor, to discuss what I should do after leaving the place that was supposed to help me get ready for the real world, I for the first time realized that I did not have to work in the world which lies outside of a college campus. I could stay in the intellectually stimulating space and remain under the protection and support I felt as a student. Even as a student, I was able to witness the positive images of student affairs and higher education. I was able to see how positive and happy the student affairs professionals were around me. All the events they were connected to were filled with networking, icebreakers, fuzziness and coziness. Working in student affairs looked very appealing, and being able to work in a collegiate setting, that I perceived as providing a shield or buffer from the real world made it even more appealing. This realization pushed me to consider embarking upon a career in student affairs.

As a Black woman, first generation college student from public housing, I understood the challenges students from similar backgrounds could face. I also knew the questions these students needed answers to but likely did not know how or to whom to ask. There was excitement in knowing that I will be helping students build the knowledge, strength, and courage to make the difference they envisioned or aid in their process of discovering and unearthing their potential and actualizing their dreams. So therefore, even in a country where racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of discrimination are apparent, my reasons for embarking on a career in student affairs stemmed from my own positive experiences as an undergraduate student, as well as my yearn and willingness to help students during their collegiate journey. These reasons are ultimately responsible for me becoming a student affairs practitioner; these reasons also helped me to remain focused on carrying out my purpose and passion for helping students



despite the challenges I faced while working at the predominantly White institution I ultimately left.

Now as I look back upon my utopian and naive views, after the gendered racialized experiences I have endured, and the stories of Black women in the academy I have heard, I cannot believe how skewed my perceptions were. I was naive in believing that the same place where I felt comfortable and protected as a student could somehow shield me from the atrocities and gendered racism which happens in the real world. I believed that I would at least have a less pronounced version of gendered racism because I was going to be protected within the parameter of a place many students do not conceptualize as the real world and some faculty feel free and liberated from. Those naive thoughts were turned upside down when I encountered my own experiences of gendered racism.

When I started working after graduating from Iowa State University, I was able to see first-hand that the field I spent eighteen months of my life learning about was not as welcoming and accepting as I had naively thought. My brute reality is responsible for me to be able to conceptualize and conduct this study. It was clear that I did not fully make the connection that the same spaces that can be hostile to Black students could be in some ways worse to the Black women who work there. It was through my own experiences working at predominantly White institutions and talking to other Black women that I have realized that we are often nothing more than unwanted guests.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Black women are a heterogeneous group, but many share similar experiences and challenges while working in academia, particularly at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). One commonality Black women share is the *outsider within phenomenon*. “Living as we did—

on the edge—we developed a particular way of seeing reality” (hooks, 1984, p. vii). This position depicts the relationship Black women often experience while occupying predominantly White institutions; their occupancy allows for them to be immersed in the institution but they are an outsider because they are often not fully embraced. This is not a new phenomenon, “Black women have long occupied marginal positions in academic settings” (Collins, 1986, p. S14). Given the history of exclusion and the intersections of racism and sexism, Black women have not been fully welcomed into the academy, particularly at PWIs. These institutions are microcosms of society and can share some of the same sentiments as the society in which they are positioned. “Educational systems reflect the values and practices of the larger society. If the larger society is sexist, racist, and based on economic, cultural, and historical inequities, it is unrealistic to expect educational systems to be devoid of these inequities” (Lewis, 1997, p. 42). Therefore, if American society views Black women as inferior, usable, and controllable so can the educational systems, particularly those who were built to stimulate the intellectual growth of White men.

The history of Black women at predominantly White institutions in America begins with the exploitive and abusive nature of enslavement. Harvard University, the oldest institution of higher education in the United States has admitted in recent years its historical ties to the exploitation of Black women and men. The first Black women who served at some predominantly White institutions were enslaved (Wilder, 2013). Some of the remnants of this history may still be embedded and actualized through the current race relations at PWIs. In fact, from enslavement to being metaphorically referred to as the *maids of academe* (Harley, 2008), Black women have continuously occupied a deprived status at these institutions.

To provide a historical context on the dual disadvantage Black women occupy, Cooper (1892) provides an account:

The colored woman of today occupies, as one may say, a unique position in this country. In a period itself transitional and unsettled, her status seems one of the least ascertainable and definitive of all the forces which make for our civilization. She is confronted by both a woman question and a race problem, and is yet an unknown or an unacknowledged factor in both (p. 134).

Although this quotation was written well over a century ago, it is still relevant and speaks to the circumstances experienced today. With membership in two oppressed socially constructed identities, Black women and their experiences in academia differ from both Black males and White women. “Unlike their white female professionals who are daughters of white men and, subsequently benefactors of white privilege, African American women at PWIs are overwhelmingly recipients of deprived consequences” (Harley, 2007, p. 20). Black women do not have the protection of their Black fathers to guard and shield them from racism or sexism. Both Black women and Black men are victims of racism. The experiences Black women and Black men face are racialized, however gender attributes to stark differences. Established gender roles and the overarching beliefs of what it means to be a woman are passed on from history, and continuously reinforced through child-play, schooling, and the media. Women in general have been seen as nurturers and caregivers; however Black women often have additional obligations and are faced with unique circumstances.

Black women have a historically rooted and complex relationship as caregivers and nurturers in America. “African American women were seen as the nurturers of the race and to that end they had been responsible for helping others in their families and communities” (Humphrey Brown, 2001, p. 220). Black women have long been seen as the nucleus and nurturers of the Black family, however there are times in history where their role was complicated through their cross-racial obligations and circumstances. During slavery, Black women were caregivers to White children and White families, while simultaneously helping to

build community and provide care to others who also had to endure the harsh realities of enslavement. During Jim Crow, “as servants, black women often worked a 14 to 16 hour day and were on-call round the clock...Her own children were left in the care of husband or older siblings” (Glenn, 1991, p. 96). Because of the laws and practices which were put into place after slavery many Black women pursued jobs as domestic help, where they cooked, cleaned, and cared for White children and adults. These Black women’s nurturing and caregiving skills were used for the benefits of White people. Black women had to often sacrifice nurturing their own children to acquire money to provide for her family. These women were faced with a challenging choice and dire circumstances where if they did not go to provide care to others their own children could starve and family was likely to become even more impoverished.

The imagery, stereotypes, and choices Black women were subjected to, conflict with how their womanhood is utilized within their own race, are still relevant in our capitalistic society. This notion of Black women having to be the nurturer of their race and having a history where their nurturing was exploited and used by White families, is in some ways still manifesting in the academy. Black women who work at PWIs are more likely to encounter and meet the needs of White students, with the exception of those who work in multicultural student affairs and other programs geared towards students of color. Black women as nurturers and willing to provide care to students, particularly White students, is in many ways an expectation that is spilled over from society and manifested on predominantly White campuses. These women are often asked to perform task others are not asked to do, and are held to different standards especially as it pertains to providing care. As student affairs practitioners, it is not permissible for Black women to deviate from exemplifying a pleasant, caring, and student-centered persona. In many ways self-sacrificial actions are often essential and definitely rewarded, in student affairs. Putting

students first, following the direction of campus authority figures, and uplifting the reputation of your department and institution are often tied to professional upward-mobility, especially for Black women. This complicated nurturing expectation, Black women are faced with, is something Black men are not usually expected to perform in the academy. Also cross-racial nurturing is not something White women are subjected to fulfilling, but is an expectation of Black women at PWIs.

This legacy of mistreatment and disadvantage is endemic and deeply rooted in the founding of some of these institutions and is continued through the personal interactions and institutional policies and practices some Black women have to endure. Marginalization, exceptionalism, and tokenism are often words used to describe the experiences of Black women faculty members at PWIs, however these same words can also be appropriate in discussing the experiences of non-faculty Black women at these colleges and universities. Often times Black women are “forced, either covertly or overtly, to compromise their gender and/or racial/ethnic identities and when their White colleagues hold unrealistic expectations, insisting that they be shining examples of their group and somehow different from other Blacks and other women” (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001, p. 167). Black women who choose not to assimilate are seen as problematic and not being a team player and are often compared to the negative stereotypes of Black women and deemed as unprofessional. Being one’s authentic self and working at a PWI can provide significant challenges to some Black women. “African American women at PWIs suffer from a form of race fatigue-the syndrome of being over extended, undervalued, unappreciated, and just knowing that because you are the ‘negro in residence’ that you will be asked to serve and represent the ‘color factor’ in yet another capacity” (Harley, 2008, p. 21).

Having to continuously navigate this can cause Black women to contemplate leaving the place which often views and makes them feel as outsiders.

### **Significance of the Study**

Previous research has documented the challenges Black women face while employed at predominantly White institutions (Collins, 1986; Gregory, 1995; 2001). The challenges Black women are confronted with in the academy are magnified due to their identity as both women and Black. Their identities as both women and Black have contributed to their dual discrimination to form “gendered racism” (Thomas, Witherspoon, Speight, 2008). The challenges some of these women faced while employed in PWIs may significantly contribute to their contemplation of leaving the academy and pursuing other opportunities. No previous studies have provided a holistic approach to understanding the circumstances in which non-faculty Black women contemplate or decide to leave the academy. Having a deeper understanding of the many facets and ways White supremacy is embedded in not only predominantly White colleges and universities but also within the surrounding college towns is important, and in many ways, long overdue.

It is important to note that, during the conduction of this study, there were more studies about the experiences of Black women faculty, and no study that directly and holistically addresses Black women in the academy who are not members of the faculty. In this case *holistically* refers to studies addressing all potential factors, including discrimination in the workplace, the racial climate of the surrounding city, and other circumstances, which can contribute to voluntary termination. There could be many reasons for this disparity in scholarship. One reason being that academic professions do not usually write about their lived

experiences in the academy, like Black faculty members often do. The disparity in empirical research can further contribute to their feelings of being an unwanted guest at a PWI and can exacerbate their condition as silenced and marginalized beings. “It is axiomatic that if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others—for their use and to our detriment” (Lorde, 1984, p. 45). As a woman who voluntarily terminated my employment from a predominantly White university, it is important for me to conduct this research. This study to some degree was *mesearch*, which references my own connection to the experiences of the Black women in the study. Not only does it help provide a holistic understanding of the factors that contribute to termination or contemplations of leaving, but it also provided an intellectual space for me and individuals who have experienced this phenomenon to define ourselves for ourselves.

### **Institutional factors that affect employee retention.**

This research is important in a plethora of ways and contributes to providing insight of the institutional factors which could help with employee retention. Productivity can be significantly impacted depending on the work environment and institutional climate (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf, & Cooper, 2010). Feelings of discomfort and constraint while occupying oppressive environments can contribute to or exacerbate negative health issues (Hicken, Lee, Morenoff, House, & Williams, 2014). Sickness can contribute to additional lack of productivity or absenteeism. Employees, who are unhappy, feel unappreciated, do not believe they have agency or a voice in their place of employment can exhibit issues which extends beyond the workplace, and can therefore contribute to their thoughts of leaving. It is beneficial, as it pertains to time, resources, and money, for institutions to address the issues which create these feelings and consequences.

Enlightened by the women's experiences and their reflection on those experiences, this study also provided some perspective on how the institution could have addressed their concerns and retained them as employees. From the data obtained in this study, adequate change to student affairs preparatory programs and the PWIs, in which Black women have voluntarily left because of discriminatory circumstances, is needed. The implications of their experiences are important because more students of color are pursuing both undergraduate and graduate educational degrees, and many institutions are actively engaged in diversity initiatives for students, staff, and faculty. Through understanding the experiences and factors that contributed to Black women exiting or contemplating leaving PWIs, it would help the colleges and universities in a number of ways. One important way this research can be influential is through focusing on the issues that contribute to Black women's contemplation of leaving, which is unearthed through this study. When an institution loses an employee it is losing more than a person. The institution is losing the contribution that person can continue to provide to the students, faculty, and staff at the college or university. The institution can also lose more time, money, and other resources to replace an employee. The replacement process may entail extensive new search and recruitment efforts, followed by training or employee orientation into the institution or in their newly acquired role.

### **The impact on the student body.**

When a Black woman who works directly with students leaves or even contemplates leaving a predominantly White institution, she is not only causing a disruption within her own life, she is also leaving behind some of the students who may have depended on her and who were inspired to continue towards their academic goals because of her efforts. These students at PWIs, particularly Black students, may have become attached to these women and upon leaving



may feel disenfranchised and ignored. They can be at risk of becoming even more disconnected from the institution. The amount of impact can vary depending on the official and unofficial roles these women play in these students' lives, but nonetheless students can to some degree be impacted.

### **The impact on current and future staff.**

This research also contributed to the understanding that these women's departure (or contemplated departure) is likely to impact current or future staff at PWIs. Based on my own experiences, leaving or thoughts of leaving can impact other employees on campus, particularly women of color in a variety of ways. One way is the potential loss of a friend or community member. The employees left behind may also notice the decrease in diversity and potentially recognize the environmental and structural issues which have contributed to the voluntary termination of their fellow colleague. It can in a sense provide a ripple effect on campus, when contemplation is discussed by one person and then becomes realized or more empathically understood by others in the environment, more people may start to reevaluate their circumstances and sense of belonging at the institution.

### **Theoretical Lens and Framework**

The theoretical lenses which guided this dissertation research were Critical Race Theory, Africana Womanism, and Historical Womanist. These perspectives allowed for race and gender to be brought to the forefront and used to address the factors that led to the participants' voluntarily terminating their employment at a predominantly White college or university. Each of these theoretical lenses were explored more extensively in the next chapter.

### **(WHO) Healthy Workplace.**

The World Health Organization (WHO) Healthy Workplace framework provided the holistic approach needed to address the challenges Black women face in predominantly White institutions and often while living in predominantly White towns. Utilizing the World Health Organization Healthy Workplace as a framework allowed for the ability to ask relevant questions when exploring the issues Black women at PWIs face, which contributes to their thoughts of leaving or the reality of leaving, provided an innovative perspective to a topic that couples issues of race and gender in a work environment.

There are four avenues of influence for a healthy workplace (Burton, 2010). One avenue which can contribute to a healthy workplace, and can also be the cause of an unhealthy space, is the physical work environment. For Black women working on predominantly White campuses, the physical work environment can be the architecture of the buildings, artifacts and statues on campus, the location of their office, and the furniture in their working space. Many elements of the physical work environment can impact how a person feels about a particular institution and it can ultimately be a component which contributes to Black women choosing or contemplating leaving the academy. The psychosocial work environment is another avenue of influence which can lead to a healthy or non-healthy vocational experience. This avenue encompasses “the organization of work and the organizational culture; the attitudes, values, beliefs and practices that are demonstrated on a daily basis in the enterprise /organization, and which affect the mental and physical well-being of employees” (Burton, 2010, p. 85). This can include the policy and practices on a particular campus as well as the unspoken rules and office culture embedded in the workplace. The third avenue of influence is the personal health resources in the workplace. This includes how supportive the environment is and may encompass the “health services, information, resources, opportunities and flexibility an enterprise provides to workers to support

or motivate their efforts to improve or maintain healthy personal lifestyle practices, as well as to monitor and support their ongoing physical and mental health” (Burton, 2010, p. 86). Black women in the academy may view such resources as positively or negatively contributing to their physical and mental health, as well as spiritual and cultural enrichment. Enterprise community involvement is the fourth avenue of influence. “Enterprises exist in communities, affect and are affected by those communities. Since workers live in the communities, their health is affected by the community physical and social environment” (Burton, 2010, p. 87). Discussing the enterprise community can help to provide more insight into the circumstances and ideologies in the surrounding community which can also influence Black women’s decision to leave a PWI.

### **Research Questions**

The five guiding research questions facilitated the exploration of the experiences of Black women who voluntarily terminated their non-faculty employment at predominantly White colleges or universities.

The first three questions explored how the theoretical lenses of Critical Race Theory (CRT), Africana Womanism, and Historical Womanism Theory contributed to this population’s contemplation and ultimate departure from the institution where they were previously employed:

What elements of CRT are relevant to Black women’s experiences as non-faculty at PWIs?

How do the ideas which underlie Africana Womanism inform Black women’s thoughts and choices during the contemplation stage and upon terminating their non-faculty employment at PWIs?

In what ways are elements of Historical Womanist apparent in the lives and choices of Black women who ultimately departed the PWI they were once employed?

The final two questions used the WHO Healthy Workplace theoretical framework to explore the experiences that contributed to departure and what factors could have helped to retain this population:

In what ways, if any, did the physical work environment, psychosocial work environment, personal health resources, and/or enterprise community involvement contribute to a healthy or unhealthy workplace and Black women's contemplation and ultimate choice to voluntarily terminate their non-faculty employment at a PWI?

In what ways, if any, could the physical work environment, psychosocial work environment, personal health resources, and/or enterprise community involvement have contributed to retaining these women?

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The purpose of this literature review was to provide an exploration of the theoretical perspectives that helped to ground this study as well as highlight the discrimination Black women face in the workplace. The first part of the literature review discusses the origins, appropriateness, and weaknesses of using Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Thought, Africana Womanism, and Historical Womanist for this study. This is followed by a discussion on the employment history of Black women, then literature on workplace discrimination faced by Black women in non-specific work environments, and lastly by the unique experiences Black women face in the academy. The literature reviewed represents a plethora of workspaces, including institutions of higher education, because there is a wide range of work tasks and responsibilities on college campuses. A college or university can be seen as a microcosm and therefore, the types of jobs and workspaces can emulate the larger community of society. All of the literature reviewed helped to provide a context for the larger phenomenon of discrimination Black women face both within and outside of the academy.

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a perspective which is “experientially grounded, oppositionally expressed, and [has a] transformatively aspirational concern with race and other socially constructed hierarchies” (Bell, 1995, p. 900). The hierarchies of power associated with social identities, particularly race, are what this perspective is concerned with. CRT brings to the forefront issues pertaining to “race and racism in the law and society” (Lynn & Parker, 2006, p. 258). CRT’s origins were steeped in law; its focus was on issues of race and racism in the law (Crenshaw, 2002). “Originally a theoretical movement in the field of law, CRT has expanded over the past decade to include scholars in the social sciences, humanities and education” (Tate

IV, 2005, p. 267). In the area of education, CRT has been used to better understand and address issues of disparity and deprive. This framework is used to examine issues pertaining to race and racism in American society.

### **Tenets of Critical Race Theory.**

Critical Race Theory includes tenets that depict the fundamental beliefs of the perspective. The tenets are not always consistently discussed and used amongst all Critical Race Theorists. Each tenet; *racism is endemic in American life*, *Whiteness as property*, *racial realism*, *interest convergence*, and *counter-story* are discussed in order to better understand the racism Black women face in America and at PWIs.

#### ***Racism is endemic in American life.***

Race is a socially constructed way for classification of one's identity. "Racism is normal, not aberrant, in American society. Because racism is an ingrained feature of our landscape, it looks ordinary and natural to persons in the culture" (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv). This is one of the fundamental tenets of CRT because racism is historical and currently present in American society. Just like other socially constructed identity distinction markers, there are certain groups which benefit and are privileged while others are disadvantaged and oppressed. Race has been a significant factor that is deeply rooted and controversial in the United States. Since the founding of America, race has been an issue that has had a tremendous impact on interpersonal relationships and politics. Through a history of blatant, subtle and institutionalized racism, White people have been collectively advantaged in America. Black people in America have always been at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. "Blacks remain disadvantaged and deprived because of their race" (Bell, 1987, p. 239). The racism endured by Black people has changed and in many ways become less overt and brutal. However, it is still a permanent component of

the Black American experience. The disadvantages of Blacks manifest in many aspects of American life, and educational institutions, including colleges and universities, are prime examples of spaces where these disparities are apparent.

This tenet of CRT can provide an understanding that racism is a permanent fixture in American society. Institutions of higher education are microcosms of society. Colleges and universities can, therefore be spaces where racism in many ways is preserved and practiced. All of the history and current social ills and triumphs manifest in these spaces. The predominantly White institutions the participants ultimately left were places in which racism and sexism still remained.

***Whiteness as Property.***

Whiteness as property addresses the rights and privileges White people have. Harris (1993) conceptualized White privilege as “the legal legitimization of expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of white privilege and domination” (p. 1715). These rights and privileges are provided or held by White people based on the racial hierarchy rooted in the history of this country. Harris (1993) discusses Whiteness as property as historically rooted.

“Slavery linked the privilege of Whites to the subordination of Blacks through a legal regime that attempted the conversion of Blacks into objects of property. Similarly, the settlement and seizure of Native American land supported White privilege through a system of property rights in land in which the ‘race’ of Native Americans rendered their first possession right invisible and justified conquest” (Harris, 1993, p. 1721)

This quotation demonstrates how Whiteness as property was established when White people became the legal owners of enslaved Blacks and took control of the occupied land in what was

later called America. The acts of Whites' declaration of ownership of people and land from the past in many ways still impact the thoughts and actions of some Whites in contemporary times.

In a society in which White people are collectively the most privileged and Black people are collectively the most oppressed, White people have authority and power which are not afforded to Black people. There are many areas of society in which Whiteness as property is apparent, and the manifestation of White privilege is demonstrated. The health disparities, lack of access to healthy food, the injustice of the judicial system, and housing discriminatory practices are examples where Whiteness as property is displayed. Whiteness as property is also found in educational institutions and places of employment.

Predominantly White institutions or historically White colleges or universities are spaces of Whiteness. White people on a predominantly White campus can feel some sense of ownership, whereas Black people are not always afforded that privilege. "Personhood often correlates with the way that one is forced or allowed to live in relationship to space and place. Space, race, and place are constituted transactionally such that space is raced and the bodies become raced through their lived spatiality" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 127). Spatial politics at predominantly White institutions can continue to perpetuate the notion of White privilege, including spaces which are believed to be inclusive. "Far from being a neutral, empty arena in which people of various races are located, space both constitutes and is constituted by white privilege. Many spaces that might seem free of the impact of race and racism often subtly and invisibly privilege white over non-white people" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 127). Predominantly White institutions are an extension of Whiteness as property and White occupancy as normalized. On predominantly White campuses, Black bodies and their mobility are surveilled, monitored, or limited by the confines of White people's declared ownership of space. White people and their



mobility are not limited to one particular space on campus. “Unlike black people, white people are seen by a white racist society as having the right or authority to enter freely any public space they wish” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 133). The campus environments, in which this research is focused, are not exceptions to this notion of Whiteness as having access to unlimited mobility and property.

Whiteness as property not only refers to ownership of a specific space or rights, it can also manifest, “when students [and/or staff] are rewarded only for conformity to perceived ‘white norms’ or sanctioned for cultural practices [that differ from these norms] (e.g., dress, speech patterns, unauthorized conceptions of knowledge)” (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995, p. 22). There are many instances where Black women are sanctioned and looked down upon for being themselves in the workplace. Black women in the workplace are examined “constantly under a microscope and... [have to deal with] supervisors and/or coworkers... [who are] always looking for behavior that would confirm their stereotypical beliefs about Black women” (Hall, Everett, Hamilton-Mason, 2012, p. 214). In a space of Whiteness, behavior that deviates from White norms or standards is seen as inferior, and in the workplace it can be seen as displaying unprofessionalism.

### ***Racial Realism.***

Race was not always a concept as it currently exists in the United States. Smedley and Smedley (2005) discuss when the shift from cultural attributes to the concept of race occurred. The concept of race was utilized and distributed through literature and practice. “By the Revolutionary era, *race* was widely used, and its meaning had solidified as a reference for *social* categories of Indians, Blacks, and Whites” (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 19). Race then became a new concept for how society should be categorized and structured. Having race be a

way for structuring society was as the authors discussed, a “needed [fabrication] because the leaders of the American colonies at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century had deliberately selected Africans to be permanent slaves” (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 19). Therefore, race as a concept was constructed as a response to measures and tactics Europeans were utilizing to further their political, economic, and social expansion. Creating a hierarchal system based on physical attributes and what W.E.B. DuBois (1897) calls, “the differences of color, hair, and bone” (p. 816), was essential to White expansion and their justification of the treatment of non-White people.

The history of Black people in the United States and their quest for the right and opportunity to obtain an education depicts the realism of racism. Throughout history, Black people were suppressed and kept in a state of oppression. Black people, because of the history of exclusion, often feel like outsiders in educational spaces, specifically predominantly or historically White institutions. “So complete is this exclusion that black students [and staff] often come to the university in the role of intruders who have been granted special permission to be there” (Ladson-Billings & Tate IV, 1995, p. 23). Institutions of higher education are spaces where incidences of racism and oppression still occur.

There are many predominantly White institutions of higher education where blatant and/or institutionalized racism is a part of their past and present. Some of the current examples of racism at PWIs range from racially targeted hate speech, discriminatory student admission’s trends, to employee hiring and promotion practices. Racism on predominantly White campuses is rooted in the notion that these campuses were created for the intellectual advancement of White people, more specifically White men. Black people, particularly those in roles of authority, are not natural at predominantly or historically White institutions. These educational

settings are not a common landscape for Black bodies; therefore their bodies in these spaces are not accepted wholeheartedly. “Human beings ‘have’ space because they ‘have’ bodies, but in the United States...human beings embody particular kinds of spaces because of the racing of bodies...space is raced by means of bodily existence and how bodies come to be raced through the spaces they are allowed to inhabit” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 166). Bodies are read as texts daily on college campuses in America. Despite the continual academic strides Black people make towards prosperity and intellectual advancement, their racialized experiences on predominantly White campuses are not eradicated. Black women employed at PWIs may be able to advance professionally and economically but that does not mean that those individuals and other Black people are exempt from racism and White supremacy.

Racial realism is accepting the fact that racism is an actual lived experience in American society. Bell (1992) discusses the notion that Black people will always be oppressed by White supremacy and racism. “Black people will never gain full equality in this country, even those Herculean efforts we hail as successful will produce no more than temporary ‘peaks of progress,’ short-lived victories that slide into irrelevance as racial patterns adapt in ways that maintain white dominance” (Bell, 1992, p. 373). Although there have been many *peaks of progress* in this country, the disparities amongst Black people compared to White people are still pronounced. Whenever there are advances for Black people, White people’s collective advancement is increased which continuously leads to more disparities. It becomes a situation where Black people can see the progress they have made in this country, but when compared to the adaptive ways of society collectively Black people are lagging and their progress never adequately challenges or overturns White dominance. The concept of racial realism through racialized

experiences in racialized spaces is how CRT as a theoretical perspective recognizes the experiential knowledge of people of color, and more specifically Black people.

Racial realism is a phenomenon which depends on the socially constructed concept of race. The concept of race and its connection to oppression and dominance has existed for only a few centuries. Although, race is displayed through daily lived experiences, race and the power dynamics are spatially specific. In the United States those with power are White and those who were systematically placed at the bottom of the racial hierarchy are Black. Structures and politics in America, particularly in specific spaces within the country, contribute to the perpetuation and realization of the hierarchical manifestation of the daily racialized experiences of Black people.

Institutions of higher education and the racial and spatial politics which are manifested in those spaces can contribute to Black women's contemplation of terminating their non-faculty employment at PWIs. College and universities may contribute to positive outcomes and stimulate personal, social, and intellectual growth, but these spaces still operate and are situated in a White dominant country where Black people are oppressed and kept within the parameters of structured racism.

### ***Interest Convergence.***

Interest convergence is yet another tenet of Critical Race Theory, which can help in understanding Black women's employment in the academy. Bell (1980) describes interest convergence as a phenomenon that occurs when non-Whites' attempts for equity and civil rights are granted only when they coincide with the self-interest and agenda of White people.

"Whiteness can be possessed, transferred, and used to the benefit of those who hold this status. Interest convergence refers to the notion that civil rights gains for Blacks (and other minorities)

will only result if these gains converge with the interests of Whites” (Gasman & Hilton, 2012, pp. 3-4). There are many instances where strides for equity fought for by Black people were granted, yet the circumstances and positionality of White people were not jeopardized or significantly impacted. Hiring and promotion of Black women at PWIs can in some instances be seen as interest convergence. This is not to say that all White people are racist or are only moved to make decisions from which they can benefit. It is, however, important to understand that some Black women are hired at predominantly White institutions to further the agenda or benefit of Whiteness. Diversity initiatives, as they pertain to hiring people of color and other minoritized groups, can in some ways be seen as interest convergence. The hiring may not be as much about wanting to hire Black women because of the institution’s respect and appreciation of Black women; it can be because of the ways in which the institution benefits from diversity.

Fine and Handelsman (2010) further discuss the institutional benefits of diversifying.

The diversity of a university’s faculty, staff, and students influences its strength, productivity, and intellectual personality. Diversity of experience, age, physical ability, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, and many other attributes contributes to the richness of the environment for teaching and research. We also need diversity in discipline, intellectual outlook, cognitive style, and personality to offer students the breadth of ideas that constitute a dynamic intellectual community. (p. 1).

The institution can appear in a better light and be deemed inclusive and progressive if their student body and staff are diverse. Predominantly White institutions have much to gain through diversifying their campuses. With the help of Black women, it will be these campuses that will be strengthened. “Whiteness as possession describes not just the act of owning, but also the obsessive psychosomatic state of white owners. Commodifying non-white peoples and cultures, unconscious habits of white privilege tend to transform them into objects for white appropriation and use” (Sullivan, 2006, p. 122). Therefore, having Black women employed at predominantly

White institutions can be seen as a strategic recruiting measure which can result in more opportunities to further use and, unfortunately, exploit Black talent and bodies in the academy.

***Counter-story.***

Counter-stories as a tenet of Critical Race Theory are used to give voice to the lived experiences of marginalized people, often left out or misinterpreted in the dominant narrative. Counter-stories are utilized “because members of our society who have traditionally been silenced tell these stories, they serve to counteract the stories, or the grand narratives, of the dominant groups and to challenge the status quo” (Rousseau & Dixson, 2006, p. 63). Black women have often been seen as silenced and kept out of history. Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith (1993) demonstrates this notion of exclusion through the title, “*But Some of Us Are Brave: All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men*” (cover). This title implies that Black women do not neatly fit into the women or Black narratives, which are already counter-stories to the White male dominant narrative. The stories of these individuals are used as “means of exposing and critiquing normalized dialogues that perpetuate racial stereotypes. The use of counter-stories allows for the challenging of privileged discourses, the discourses of the majority, therefore serving as a means for giving voice to marginalized groups” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 27). Black women are therefore, a counter-story not only to the dominant narrative, but within both minoritized and oppressed identities. Being both women and Black, their stories are even further from the norm. Black women at predominantly White institutions already provide a counter-narrative to the White normative narrative. The stories of the participants, serve as counter-stories which not only challenge the White dominant narrative, but also provided a counter-story to the literature, which disproportionately includes the experiences of Black women faculty in the academy. Therefore, the stories I tell through this research are in many ways counter-stories,

and as a researcher I was able to give voice to a population which was silenced, not only because they are Black women, but also because they are physically removed from the institutions in which their gendered racist experiences occurred.

### ***Criticism of Critical Race Theory.***

There are scholars who reject CRT as a legitimate theoretical perspective. One area of critique presented is this notion that CRT, a race-centered perspective, is in some ways counterproductive to a society which is trying to heal and move forward from its blatant racist past. “Thinking about racism as a fundamental part of U.S. societal structure is unsettling when many people are trying to dismantle and work against it” (Hiraldo, 2010, p. 57). It can be inferred that those who view CRT as unsettling, because of its focus on race and racism, may be more susceptible and accepting of the notion of colorblindness. Those who view CRT as inflammatory may also be proponents of accepting, supposed progressive language which emphasizes oneness and notions of the human race as the only race. It is my belief that even if the circumstances surrounding race relations in America does not continue to improve through research or other measures, it is still important to be informed and discuss race, racism, and why it is such an unsettling topic in our society.

As previously mentioned CRT gives voice to those who are racially oppressed. The voice of those who are racially oppressed can be heard through sharing stories and therefore their experiential experiences and knowledge serve as validation and proof. There are some scholars who deem this component which is inherently central to CRT as problematic. “Rather than receiving respect, this kind of scholarship is regarded as illegitimate, biased, or overly subjective” (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2010, p. 171). Delgado Bernal and Villalpanda (2010) discusses how some scholars view race-centered research unfavorably and as an

illegitimate contribution to knowledge. This notion of illegitimizing CRT, and the experiential knowledge unearthed through race-centered research, does not allow for scholars to have a theoretically based platform in discussing issues pertaining to race or social injustices. “We often enter fields where we can work towards achieving social justice for our communities through teaching and research on issues that address the status of our politically and socio-economically disenfranchised communities” (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2010, p. 171). If theoretical perspectives and frameworks which bring race to the forefront and rely on firsthand knowledge and accounts are deemed problematic, what are appropriate ways to capture, analyze, and share these stories for a better understanding and potential institutional and societal changes?

Another critique of CRT pertains to the absence of other social identities in its foundational principles, tenets, and constructs. Although gender, class, religious or spiritual affiliation, and other social identities are not included in the framework, “CRT scholars work to address the intersectionality of race and other social identities within their analysis” (Hiraldo, 2010, p. 57). As a race-centered theoretical perspective, CRT’s main focus is on race and the power dynamics which are represented through blatant and institutionalized racism. I believe given the unique and blatant history of Black people in this country, race should be a social identity which can be focused on and explored without being required to add other identities which attempt to find commonalities between Black and White people. Because of race there are differences between how a Black, poor, woman is viewed and treated by society in comparison to a White, poor woman. Understanding the differences between races, especially the stark differences between the experiences and treatment of Blacks and Whites, can be fully understood through a race-centered exploration, which CRT provides.

#### **Appropriateness of utilizing Critical Race Theory in this research.**



It is therefore evident that the tenets of Critical Race Theory can provide tremendous insight and understanding as it pertains to Black women at predominantly White institutions and the racialized experiences that can contribute to their voluntary termination of employment. The only weakness of CRT as related to this research is that it does not specifically address Black women. CRT is race centered and therefore, does not focus on the unique experiences of Black women. In a society where as Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith (1993) suggest, Black people are men and women are White, CRT in my opinion would not be the best choice to use as a standalone theoretical perspective to ground a dissertation specifically researching Black women. However in conjunction with Africana Womanism and Historical Womanist this theoretical perspective can contribute to an enriched discussion and more enlightenment as it pertains to the research topic.

### **Black Feminist Thought**

Black Feminist Thought is a theoretical perspective that brings the daily experiences and challenges of Black women to the forefront. The discrimination and marginalization of Black women, in both the Black Liberation Movement and Women's Movement, led to the creation of Black Feminist Thought (Hull, Bell-Scott, & Smith, 1993). As an offshoot of White feminism, Black feminism became a movement which provided Black women with an alternative framework to address their needs. "Instead of starting with gender and then adding in other variable such as age, sexual orientation, race, social class, and religion, Black feminist thought sees these distinctive systems of oppression as being part of one overarching structure of domination" (Collins, 1990, p. 222). Black women's realization of the intersectionality of oppressions is what created Black Feminist Thought. Similar to the notion of Black people being able to legitimize their understanding of race and racism through lived experiences in Critical Race Theory, Black Feminist Thought is influential in unearthing the notion that Black women,

who uniquely face oppression through both their race and gender, gain understanding through lived experiences. It also helps to make explicit the concept that, although Black women have a collective history of oppression and exploitation, they also have multiple truths and individualized experiences. Collins' conceptualization of Black Feminist Thought, "played a critical role in solidifying the theoretical traditions of African-Americans by placing their ideas at the center of analysis" (Norris, 2012, p. 452). By putting Black women's ideas and ideals at the center to be critiqued and understood requires a lens which is specific and unique to Black women. Given Black women's history and the circumstances they uniquely face in America their thoughts, experiences, and conceptualizations are different than Black men and women from other racial backgrounds. Black Feminist Thought was created to address the unique perspective and circumstances Black women face.

### **The choice of not using Black Feminist Thought in this research.**

Although based on my topic, Black Feminist Thought can be applicable, however when examining the connotations of feminism this lens may not be the most appropriate to utilize in this study. "Black feminist thought's purpose, namely, fostering *both* Black women's empowerment *and* conditions of social justice" (Collins, 2000, p. x). Collins therefore believes that the purpose of Black Feminist Thought is to foster Black women's empowerment; however the feminist and feminism aspect at the center of this lens can be seen as problematic. "The label 'feminism' which place gender-based empowerment at the forefront; however, Africana Womanism is based on the belief that gender empowerment and equality cannot exist in a context of racial oppression" (Mena & Saucier, 2014, pp. 250-251). Given the racial oppression faced by both Black men and Black women, a true sense of gender empowerment and equality is not possible. "Feminism is fundamentally a European phenomenon. As such, it is loaded with

European metaphysical principles, such as the conflictual relationship between the genders whereas men are seen as the primary enemies of women” (Mazama, 2003, p. 27). This notion may not actually be the sole premise of Black Feminist Thought. It is, however, a connotation that is at the root of the exclusionary and different historical and contemporary circumstances from which White feminists sought liberation, which are uniquely different than the plight of Black women in America. Collins (2000) addressed the criticism Black Feminist Thought has received related to connotations of feminist and feminism. Collins (2000) believes that besides having arguments “over naming practices—for example, whether this thought should be called Black feminism, womanism, Afrocentric feminism, Africana womanism, and the like—a more useful approach lies in revisiting the reason why Black feminist thought exists at all” (p. 22). I believe that Black Feminist Thought can provide a useful perspective to research pertaining to Black women, however the name and connotation can be detrimental. Hudson-Weems (2004) discusses this notion and the inadequacies of Black Feminist Thought and why Africana Womanism is a more suitable alternative. Because Black Feminist Thought grew out of the White feminist movement, Hudson-Weems (2004) rejects it as a tool to define Africana women:

The dominant culture has elected to name and define Africana women outside of their cultural and historical context via the superimposition of an alien construct—Eurocentrism/feminism. In essence, the dominant culture has held the position of identifying who we are and how we fit into the scheme of things with little regard for what we ourselves perceive as our authentic reality and identity (p. 21).

The concept of feminism is not a Black construct; instead it is a White construct which was adopted by Black women who used it to address their dual oppression of being Black and a woman. Due to Black Feminist Thought’s various definitions and implementations, the concepts can be embedded and serve as a foundation for other theoretical perspectives. Although some of the components of Black Feminist Thought are present in this research, it is better conveyed

through other related perspectives such as Africana Womanism and Historical Womanist. My choice to not include this lens is because of its controversy and my own issues with the historical context of exclusion of Black women and their challenges from the traditional feminist movement. “In the American experience the feminist movement had effectively displaced Black unity...[while] we sit idly by and let whites turn Harriet Tubman and Rosa Parks into supporters for White feminism as opposed to race defenders” (Carruthers, 1980, p. 18). This research, although focused on Black women, does not present these women’s experiences or contemplations through a lens which supports White feminism and abandons or disrupts racial unity. Julia Hare further discusses the need for Black women to reject feminism:

Women who are calling themselves Black feminists need another word that describes what their concerns are. Black Feminism is not a word that describes the plight of Black women...The white race has a woman problem because the women were oppressed. Black people have a man and woman problem because Black men are as oppressed as their women. (Crawford, 1993, p.15).

This quotation eloquently discusses how Black women are members of a race that is affected by oppression, whereas White women are oppressed through their gender but are recipients of White privilege due to their race. As a researcher, I believe it is best to take Hare’s advice and find another term, or theoretical perspective to use. Therefore, I do not believe it the most appropriate lens to use to ground this research, and instead of using Black Feminist Thought as a theoretical lens, Africana Womanism and Historical Womanist were used to provide context and to address the unique experiences of Black women in the United States.

### **Africana Womanism**

To provide voice and examine the effects of systematic oppression and how it manifests in the workplace and infiltrates the surrounding community, the theoretical lens of Africana womanism was utilized. Africana Womanism is a term coined by Clenora Hudson-Weems “in

1987 after nearly two years of publicly debating the importance of self-naming for Africana women” (Hudson-Weems, 1993, p. 47). Being able to self-name and self-define the experiences of Black women is why the term Africana Womanism was coined. Hudson-Weems does not credit herself in creating Africana Womanism, a phenomenon she believes dates to African womanhood. “I did not create the phenomenon in and of itself, but rather observed Africana women, document our reality, and refined a paradigm relative to who we are, what we do, and what we believe in as a people” (Hudson-Weems, 1998, p. 449). Therefore, Africana Womanism was coined through the observations of Hudson-Weems as a means to define Africana women.

In light of the notion that feminism can be seen as less productive and often detrimental to women of the African diaspora, Africana Womanism provides a different perspective to address the issues Black women face because of their gendered racism. The intersections of both race and gender are important and remained coupled in the discussion of the factors which contribute to Black women contemplating or leaving PWIs. In a country where Black women are oppressed by both their gender and racial identity, this notion of Black women having different experiences and subsequently different thoughts and ways of addressing their challenges, is a premise of Africana Womanism. This understanding can be used to provide a context for the thoughts the women had while contemplating their departure from a PWI. Black women with their different experiences, which leads to different meaning-making and conceptualizations, can ultimately lead to different processes and routes to departure from their former institution. Andersen (2010) discusses the notion of oppression being developed and perpetuated in schools, places of employment, and other social institutions. The Black women, who participated in this study, discussed the experiences and factors which contributed to their

contemplations of voluntarily terminating their non-faculty employment at PWIs. This is essentially asking these women to share their thoughts, feelings, and conceptualizations as it pertain to their lived experience and truths while employed at a predominantly White college or university.

Through the perspective of Africana Womanism, Black women do not view men “as her primary enemy as does the White feminist, who is carrying out an age-old battle with her White male counterpart for subjugating her as his property. Africana men have never had the same institutionalized power to oppress Africana women as White men have had to oppress White women” (Hudson-Weems, 2004, p. 26). The issues of White woman where directly connected to the patriarchal and sexist treatment they experienced at the hands of White men. That is why many feminist perspectives are rooted in a power struggle between women and men. Collins (1996) depicts womanism as an appropriate means in which Black women can “address gender-oppression without attacking Black men” (p. 11). The ability to address gendered racialized experiences, thoughts, and actions in absence of bashing or blaming the Black males is central to Africana Womanism. “What makes Africana Womanism different from any other female-based theory is that we are inseparable and one—as the other, I should say the other side of the coin from the Africana man—collectively struggling, as we’ve always done as Africans” (Reed, 2001, p. 169). This notion is situated in an understanding of those in the African diaspora are collectivistic in nature and have a shared history of discrimination based on race. Because the systems of oppression are different for Black women, in comparison to White women, the ideologies and theoretical lens used to address their problems should also be different.

Africana Womanism focuses on the notion of the dual-oppression that Black women collectively face due to their positionality within the historical and contemporary context of

America, and the diaspora at large. As an Afrocentric framework, Africana Womanism combines the two oppressions and creates a space where Black women no longer have to ask themselves question like: “Should they align themselves with the liberation of the African American male? Or should they unite with other women with the hope that African American women would garner their liberty through the empowerment of women?” (Stephens, Keaveny, & Patton, 2002, p. 465). This concept of the Black woman’s struggle not neatly fitting within the Black struggle or the women’s struggle is a way to emancipate Black women’s challenges and other experiences from being only viewed and addressed through the avenues of race or gender. King (1992) discusses this concept further by mentioning how many researchers or “scholars perpetuate the invisibility of Black women through continual reference to African Americans as a monolithic genderless population” (p. 40). King (1992) suggests that it is detrimental for Black women and their unique experiences when they are not specifically addressed. The same underlying concept can apply to feminism, where women of various racial backgrounds, and therefore differing levels of privilege, are referenced as a monolithic raceless population. Therefore to address Black women, who contemplated voluntarily terminating their employment from PWIs, it is important to use Africana Womanism to ensure the intersections of race and gender is appropriately explored and critiqued.

Africana Womanism is an ideology which uniquely addresses women of the African diaspora. “Neither an outgrowth nor an addendum to feminism, *Africana Womanism* is not Black feminism, African feminism, or Walker’s womanism... [it is] grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women” (Hudson-Weems, 1993, p. 48). As a collectivistic group that is family oriented, their experiences and desires are often vastly different than those of women from more

individualized racial or ethnic groups. “While the concern for the survival of her family, both personal and collective, are of utmost importance to the Africana womanist, the mainstream feminist is self-centered or female-centered, interested in self-realization and personal gratification” (Hudson-Weems, 2009, p. 59). This concept can be actualized through Black women’s contemplations of leaving a college or university; her concern may not only be about herself. During this contemplation, Black women, who embody the concept of Africana Womanism considers the potential consequences for her nuclear, biological family as well as her collective Black family (e.g., students, other staff, and faculty) who may be left behind after her departure.

### ***Criticism of Africana Womanism.***

As mentioned before, Africana Womanism grew out of and is influenced by who and what Hudson-Weems observed. It is not to say that what she observed is wrong or illegitimate; however there could be some criticism surrounding how narrow Africana Womanism may appear. In its attempt to be applicable for all women in the African diaspora, this perspective may be seen as limiting and none inclusive. Although, historically and socially, Africana women are seen as collectivistic, there are some who exemplify thoughts and actions which depicts selfishness rather than selflessness. The sacrifices, in which many Black women are known for making for their biological family and community, are not reflective of all Black women. There are Black women who deviate from the notion of selflessness which is a tenet of Africana Womanism. This brings to question how can Black women who take on a more selfish and less compassionate persona be explored through research grounded in Africana Womanism? Will those women been deemed a threat to Africana Womanism? Fortunately, I did not have to struggle or feel conflicted with utilizing this perspective because the Black women in this study



exemplified tenets of Africana Womanism through their moments of selflessness and compassion for others.

For various reasons there are also Black women who take on a more traditional feminist perspective. These Black women view patriarchy as the root of their problems, and therefore view Black men not as a unifying force against racism but as an enemy to their femininity and womanhood. The Black women who are more aligned with traditional feminism, because of their views towards men, and specifically Black men, are also excluded from Africana Womanism. Therefore, Africana Womanism does not address its lack of applicability to Black women who do not accept or exemplify the notion of having a united collective force with Black men. Fortunately the Black women in this study did not have any deeply seeded issues with Black men, and therefore their stories were able to be analyzed using Africana Womanism.

### **Appropriateness of utilizing Africana Womanism in this research.**

With the information stated through discussing Africana Womanism and how it is a better theoretical perspective when compared to Black Feminist Thought, as well as the information stated above, it is obvious why this lens should be utilized. Africana Womanism is used as a theoretical lens to provide deeper understanding of experiences which ultimately led to Black women's voluntary termination from a predominantly White institution. This perspective, unlike some others, does not contribute to scholarship that, intentionally or inadvertently, divides Black men and Black women who are already oppressed through racism.

### **Historical Womanist**

In conjunction with Critical Race Theory and Africana Womanism, Historical Womanist is another theoretical lens that can help ground this research. Nicole Rousseau developed

“historical womanist theory (HWT), a pointed theoretical framework, essential to understanding the unique social, political, and economic positions of Black women within the United States. While many seminal feminist theorists before me have broached the issues relevant to Black women’s lives, no one theory has been able to grapple with the multi-tiered simultaneous and interconnected oppressions that make up the Black woman’s experience in the US” (Rousseau, 2013, p. 192).

Rousseau’s development of a theoretical perspective is an expansion of other theoretical perspectives which addresses Black women.

The Historical Womanist “lens situates Black women as: (1) a population of African descent in a nation historically and fundamentally rooted in a racialized slave economy; (2) women in a profoundly patriarchal structure; and (3) laborers: productive, reproductive, and biological within a capitalist system” (Rousseau, 2013, p. 193). This perspective situates Black women in a historical context which used exploitation to build a capitalistic society. Unlike CRT and Africana Womanism, Historical Womanist provides insight and context for Black women’s experiences as producers. This lens addresses the intersectionality and multiplicity of Black women workers in America. “As Black women’s relationship with the United States begins with her role in a forced labor pool, it stands to reason that her continued position in society, even in the generations after the dissolution of the slave system, would remain connected with her labor location” (Rousseau, 2013, p. 193). When exploring the experiences of Black women who disconnected themselves from a labor location they deemed unfit and oppressive, this theoretical perspective is beneficial. Although, these women are generations removed from slavery, the notion of being bounded to a particular place of employment can still be applicable, when discussing their departure process. Black women in America went from forced labor to wage labor. “From one economic era to the next, Black women continue to experience various levels of oppression as laborers, as Blacks, and as women” (Rousseau, 2013, p. 193). This research brings to light the oppression Black women face as laborers at predominantly White institutions.

### ***Criticism of Historical Womanist.***

Historical Womanist may not be as well-known or utilized as some of the other theoretical perspectives used to address the unique experiences and challenges Black women face. As a term coined a few years ago, there seems to be no published criticism associated with this perspective. I do not see the limited time of existence as a weakness of the applicability of this perspective as it pertains to my research; however I am cognizant that Historical Womanist Theory may not be known to the reader and some may mistake it for Womanist Theory.

### **Appropriateness of utilizing Historical Womanist in this research.**

Utilizing Historical Womanist as a theoretical lens is beneficial and helps to strengthen this research. When discussing Black women in the labor force it is beneficial to have a theoretical lens which provides a historical context and contemporary connection to Black women's experience as laborers. This perspective enriches this research by combining the factors of race, gender, and labor, to address the topic of Black women who voluntarily terminated their employment at a predominantly White institution after experiencing gendered racism.

### **In Conclusion**

When a racially minoritized population is the focus of research, Critical Race Theory is a perspective that can help to ground the study. The tenets of CRT helps to provide an understanding that racism is endemic in American society and that people of color have lived experiences which legitimizes their understanding of race and racism. Black Feminist Thought is a theoretical perspective which grew out of mainstream feminism that brings the issues of Black women to the forefront. Although, this perspective provides centrality to Black women's issues, it is not the best choice for this study, especially given the connotation associated with the

word *feminist*. Africana Womanism is a lens grounded in Afrocentrism that focuses on and addresses the experiences and challenges of women in the African diaspora. Africana Womanism provides a deeper understanding of the sacrifices Black women give; these acts of selflessness are in direct opposition to traditional feminist ideologies. Historical Womanist is a theoretical perspective which does not ignore the fact that Black women and their oppression are grounded in a history that has oppressed them through labor exploitation. Historical Womanist provides an additional layer which situates Black women in a capitalistic society, built off of systematic and racial oppression for White economic and social advancement and power. This perspective enriches the research by connecting the historical legacy of race, gender, and production to Black women, and applying this concept to a contemporary phenomenon of Black women choosing to terminate their employment at predominantly White institutions.

Black women, their thoughts, and experiences are unique, therefore the theoretical perspectives which best address their thoughts and experiences may be best when combined. “Like patchwork in a quilt, it is a tradition gathered from meaningful bits and pieces. My tradition has no name, because it embraces more than womanism, Blackness, or African studies” (Omolade, 1994, p. ix). This notion of utilizing the meaningful parts of a tradition or theoretical perspective is beneficial to my research. When “meaningful bits and pieces” of Critical Race Theory, Africana Womanism, and Historical Womanist are utilized together, there is a better understanding of the circumstances Black women face while living in a country where hierarchies are based on gender, race, and class. The impact on Black women is further exacerbated when occupying institutions, such as many historically White colleges or universities, which were built on Black slave labor and continue to perpetuate White supremacy.

Using these theoretical perspectives also helps to situate the power dynamics behind gender and race. CRT provides the understanding that Black people are oppressed and disadvantaged, due to racism created by White people and continued through White supremacist ideologies and practices. Africana Womanism operates under the notion that Black women should not blame men, especially Black men who have their own deprivileged status in the racial hierarchy of America, for their status in society. Africana Womanism looks at Black women's status of power as operating in conjunction with race, whereas traditional feminism completely relies on gender inequalities and injustices as its premise. Through the Historical Womanist perspective, Black women are not only seen as being situated in a history of racial oppression, or gender related discrimination, women are also seen as producers and laborers. The right theoretical perspectives are needed to better understand the historical and contemporary notions of race and economics, the dynamics of power that Black people face through White supremacy and racism, the plight of Black women, and the gendered racism Black women endure at PWIs. It is therefore evident that the ideologies of Critical Race Theory, Africana Womanism, and Historical Womanist can be used to ground and support this study.

### **Employment History of Black Women**

Black women in America were always subject to work. "Historically, the Negro woman has been the guardian, the protector, of the Negro family. From the days of the slave traders down to the present, the Negro woman has had the responsibility of caring for the needs of the family" (Jones, 1949, p. 108). The history of Black women's labor stems from a time of forced employment in the form of slavery to post-slavery where Black women had to work for their own personal survival and those of their children, and other family members. "Necessarily playing an important role in the economic and social life of her people, the Negro woman

became schooled in self-reliance, in courageous and selfless action” (Jones, 1949, p. 112). This role of being self-reliant and having to be the guardian and protector of the Black family, Jones discusses, is a significant difference when compared to the role of her White female counterparts. This notion is also connected to the ideology expressed through Africana Womanism, where the Black woman did not engage in selfishness and instead engaged in selflessness (Hudson-Weems, 2009). It is therefore evident that Black women have had a different history and occupied different social circumstances which have led to their employment.

The places in which Black women have worked, including their over-representation in agriculture and domestic work (Jones, 1949), to their ability to now work in different spaces, has significantly changed over the centuries. According to the Women in the Labor Force report only 0.1 percent of employed Black women work in agriculture and related industries, whereas 40.8 percent of employed Black women work in education and health services (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014, p. 58). These changes have allowed Black women to work in spaces they were once denied access, including predominantly White colleges and universities. Although, different spaces have been infiltrated, these work environments are not completely eradicated of the discrimination these women continue to deal with, the fact that stereotypes are damaging, and the notion of Black women having to navigate two different worlds while occupying predominantly White workspaces.

### **Workplace Discrimination Faced By Black Women**

The workplace can impact an individual in many ways. A significant portion of many people’s waking hours are spent at work or conducting activities which connect to work. Social engagement and interactions of both the positive and negative nature take place in the workplace

(Krieger, Waterman, Hartman, Bates, Stoddard, Quinn, & Barbeau, 2006). Those who have identities which are historically and currently oppressed can have even more of a difficult time at some places of employment.

### **Stress.**

Opal Palmer Adisa (1994) discusses the stress Black women face living in American society.

Did you ever wonder why so many sisters look so angry? Why we walk like we've got bricks in our bags and will slash and curse you at a drop of a hat? It's because stress is hemmed into our dresses, pressed into our hair, mixed into our perfume and painted on our fingers. Stress from the deferred dreams, the dreams not voiced; stress from the broken promises, the blatant lies; stress from always being at the bottom, from never being thought beautiful, from always being taken for granted, taken advantage of; stress from being a black woman in white America (p. 12).

Although this quotation refers to overall stress Black women are faced with, the workplace can be a setting where this stress is present and continuously perpetuated. Work can be innately challenging or demanding but it can be additionally stressful when Black women are also subjected to sexism and racism in the workplace (St. Jean & Feagin, 1998). Some of the discrimination Black women can face in the workplace can come in the form of institutional discrimination or being pushed to follow policies which “unfairly restrict [their] opportunities... [and subsequently] perpetuate advantages or privileges for the majority group” (Hughes & Dodge, 1997, p. 584). When Black women have to be concerned with the nature of the position and the subsequent stressors it may yield coupled with having to endure discriminatory treatment, these factors can take a toll on them. Stress can affect people in different ways, including contributing to behavioral, emotional, physiological changes (Hall, Everett, Hamilton-Mason, 2012). The discrimination due to gendered racism can become a chronic stressor and reality for Black women in the workplace. “Discrimination in the workplace against Black,

female workers comes in the form of stereotypes, excessive demands, an absence of mentoring, exclusions from work [office] cliques, being ignored and/or harassed, and assumptions that they are incompetent” (Hall, Everett, Hamilton-Mason, 2012, p. 211). Black women in the workplace, therefore face discrimination through being subjected to stereotypes and navigating two different worlds.

### **Microaggressions.**

Some of the gendered racism Black women endure in the workplace is covert and not as blatant. Some of the experiences are better explained and classified as racial microaggressions. “Racial microaggressions cause considerable psychological distress among Black Americans and are manifested in nearly all interracial encounters” (Sue, Capodilupo, Holder, 2009, p. 329). When Black women are working at predominantly White colleges or universities there are many instances where they can fall victim to gendered racial microaggressions. Microinsults and microinvalidations are two types of microaggressions.

Both tend to be expressed unconsciously by the perpetrator, yet communicate a hidden demeaning message to the person of color. Microinsults are described as behavioral and verbal expressions that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean an individual’s racial heritage or identity...Microinvalidations invalidate, negate, or diminish the psychological thoughts, feelings, and racial reality of Black Americans” (Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2009, p. 329).

These forms of microaggressions may be seen as innocent or unintentional, but they can still contribute to an unhealthy workspace. Another form of microaggressions which can be experienced in the workplace is microassaults. These “are probably most similar to what has been called *old-fashioned racism* because their expression is deliberate, conscious, and explicit. Calling someone a ‘nigger,’ displaying the hood of the Ku Klux Klan, or refusing to serve a Black person are examples of microassaults” (Sue, Nadal, Capodilupo, Lin, Torino, & Rivera,



2008, p. 330). Microassaults are not innocent or unintentional; they are intended to be oppressive and hurtful (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). When Black women experience microaggressions at work, it can have a profound and lasting impact on them.

### **Stereotypes.**

The stereotypes of Black women also follow them to their workplace; in fact sometimes these stereotypes serve as barriers to keep Black women from gaining access to some positions. The stereotype of Black women being hostile can affect all Black women who seek employment at a particular institution. “It’s like you don’t have to open your mouth but walk into a situation and you’re perceived as being hostile. I think that’s in every environment that I’ve been in and it starts to wear on your own psyche. You start questioning stuff. Am I really hostile?” (Hall, Everett, Hamilton-Mason, 2012, p.213). This can not only impact a Black woman’s self-esteem but the constant prejudgment can be stressful. The stereotype that Black women are intellectually inferior or incompetent is another stereotype which contributes to stress in the workplace. “You feel like you’re underneath a microscope. Everybody’s looking at you and making judgments about how you’re going to act...I guess I’m used to being in the fishbowl and the pressure cooker” (Hall, Everett, Hamilton-Mason, 2012, p. 214). Constantly being surveilled and monitored can put additional stress on Black women. It can make them feel as if they have to perform and seek to exceed expectations more than other employees. Black women, because of the stereotypes and gendered racism, are also subject to being denied promotions. “Inherently connected with the question of job opportunities where the Negro woman is concerned, is the special oppression she faces as Negro, as woman, as worker. She is the victim of the white chauvinist stereotype as to where her place should be” (Jones, 1949, p. 111). Although, this quotation dates back to 1949, the circumstances are still applicable to the present. “I applied for

the position and did not get it. The other person, of course, was White. She did not have near as much education. But she got the job. I went to the restroom and I cried. This was a good lesson to learn, even if you work and follow the rules, racism will keep you down” (Hall, Everett, Hamilton-Mason, 2012, p. 215). This quotation from 2012 demonstrates that keeping the Black woman in her place is a phenomenon of both the past and present. Being denied promotions not only keeps Black women from obtaining higher financial status and positions with more autonomy, it can also cause them to question their self-worth and the quality of work they contribute to the institution. It can be even more detrimental when Black women have to see White women as not only the standards of beauty in society but also as exemplifying the standard of success within the organization.

### **Navigating Two Different Worlds**

The notion of having to navigate two different worlds, one at home and one at work is a reality for some Black women. The stress of having to work with people who do not understand Black women and their cultural nuances and personality differences is a phenomenon which occurs with more frequency and intensity at predominantly White work environments (Hall, Everett, Hamilton-Mason, 2012, p. 215). Having to modify oneself to fit into a work environment is to some degree a coping mechanism. Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) further demonstrates how Black women are affected by this phenomenon.

African American women change the way they think of things or expectations they have for themselves. Or they alter their outer appearance. They modify their speech. They shift in one direction at work each morning, then in another at home each night. They adjust the way they act in one context after another. They try to cover up their intelligence with one group of friends and do everything possible to prove it to another. They deny their sadness and loneliness (p. 62).

This notion of shifting and in a sense having two different personas can be detrimental to the emotional, spiritual, and physical health of Black women (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003).

Black women in a predominantly White workplace will continue to be subjected to this phenomenon as long as the culture and standards are defined and upheld by Whiteness.

### **Experiences Black Women Face in the Academy**

Institutions of higher education are usually deemed as progressive spaces where one's freedom is more apparent, than in some other career sectors. PWIs can be seen as the opposite for many Black women. Bell hooks (1994) describes this phenomenon.

In the weeks before the English Department at Oberlin College was about to decide whether or not I would be granted tenure, I was haunted by dreams of running away –of disappearing –yes, even of dying. These dreams were not a response to fear that I would not be granted tenure. I was afraid that I would be trapped in the academy forever (p. 1).

This feeling of feeling trapped hints at a deeper issue of not having control and being placed into a box. Although, bell hooks is discussing her experience as a Black woman in a faculty role, this notion of feeling trapped can also be applicable to Black women in non-faculty roles in the academy. Some Black women who are employed in non-faculty positions can still feel as if it is significantly challenging for them to leave a particular institution for various reasons. There are also some Black women who may feel limited to staying in institutions of higher education as their means of employment for various reasons, including their lack of understanding as it pertains to being able to successfully promote their transferable skills to obtain employment in other careers.

There are some sectors of higher education where appreciation of creativity and differences appear to be perpetuated. However, the notion of Whiteness as right is embedded in the academy; Black academic spaces are not exempt. “This paradigm [of hegemony] operates in

the academy to support and protect the interests and concerns of rich white males...[as a consequence] black females in the academy are imprisoned in a dysfunctional paradigm by its logic, structures, and biased knowledge base” (Lewis, 1997, pp. 41-42). This powerful statement, further demonstrates why some Black women find the academy a place of imprisonment rather than liberation. Academia is seen as a place where the White hegemonic narrative is perpetuated as normative. Another instance, where this phenomenon is apparent, is through the words of yet another Black woman who actualizes this phenomenon. “I fooled myself into believing that I was ‘free’ in the academy...I learned that I was never really free” (Generett & Cozart, 2011, p. 124). This quotation depicts the experience of a Black woman at a predominantly White university, who followed all the rules and procedures to obtain academic tenure, however was denied because of gendered racism. This Black women’s denial of tenure stems from the notion that, “the mainstream is based on the necrophilic philosophies of patriarchy and White supremacy, both of which require the worship of dead White men, the marginalization of scholarship that threatens the fantasy that White men are greater than anyone else” (Farmer, 1993, p. 197). This notion of White male importance is not just in relationship to scholarship, it also relates to every aspect of the academy. Both Black women who are going towards tenure and those who work as student affairs practitioners are occupying the same institution, and therefore, the gendered racism faculty face can also be a reality for those who are in non-tenure positions at predominantly White institutions. The lack of value some Black female faculty members face can connect to the lack of agency and various forms of discrimination Black female staff and administrators face.

In the academy, Black women are confronted with gendered racism in many ways and on many levels. “In our country where second-class status is assigned to black folks and to

women...the last image that many Americans would have of an African American woman is that of an intellectual, an academic, a college president, a person of the academy” (Cole, 1997, p. 1).

This notion of being a person of the academy can be dissected further. The academy was not created for Black women to occupy, and furthermore lead. Predominantly White institutions can still advance these negative views of Black women occupying a position of power. Black women will have to continuously face the reality of their status in the academy.

I, on the other hand, was raised to be acutely conscious of the likelihood that, no matter what degree of professional or professor I became, people would greet and dismiss my Black femaleness as unreliable, untrustworthy, hostile, angry, powerless, irrational and probably destitute (Williams, 1987, p. 83).

Patricia Williams, in the quotation above, discusses the notion that even with education and status as a professional or professor, the gendered racialized views and circumstances of Black women at PWIs are not eliminated. The ways in which these notions are manifested in predominantly White academic settings are further explored through the stories told in Chapter 4.

### Chapter 3: Methods

To provide the answers to the research questions and deeper insight into Black women's contemplation of leaving PWIs, multiple data collection tools were utilized to construct this exploratory qualitative narrative research study. This research was able to give voice to a silenced and marginalized group who may have remained silent while enduring their discomfort and therefore, their stories may not have been heard in any other intentional manner outside of this study. Therefore, not only is it possible for this group to be physically removed from higher education but their stories and experiences may leave academia with them.

#### Positionality of the Researcher

As mentioned before, this study was in some ways *mesearch*. "Each person brings a unique cultural background to their experience. Who you are shapes the types of questions you ask, the kinds of issues which interest you, and the ways in which you go about seeking solutions" (Turner, 2000, p. 133). Although I did not use myself as a subject, I did rely on myself as a perspective. This component of adding myself as a lens and allowing my voice and story to be heard contributed to the auto-ethnographic nature of the narrative. I view autoethnography as a way for me to show others who I am and what my thoughts were. My experiences and conceptualizations of the world as a Black woman are important in this research. Utilizing autoethnography allowed me to capture that in the following chapter.

"Autoethnography is a qualitative, transformative research method because it changes time, requires vulnerability, fosters empathy, embodies creativity and innovations, eliminates boundaries, honors subjectivity, and provides therapeutic benefits" (Custer, 2014, p. 1). Being able to share my story as I reflected on the participants stories definitely had its therapeutic

benefits. There were also times where writing my story was difficult. “Because many autoethnographical studies relate to painful experiences, the researcher may encounter difficult moments during the course of the research and writing” (Raab, 2013, p. 14). There were moments when I held back tears; tears of pain, from the ordeal, and tears of triumph for overcoming and being able to write about the ordeal.

Who I am and my experiences in the academy has contributed to my desire to have a deeper understanding of the reasons and circumstances in which other Black women contemplated and ultimately chose to voluntarily terminate their employment in institutions of higher education. “Stories reported in qualitative narrative research enrich the lives of both the researcher and the participant” (Creswell, 2012, p. 501). As the researcher, a better understanding of who I am and my own experiences in the academy were reflected upon and validated through the information obtained through the research participants.

## **Research Design**

The study which received approval through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) utilized a survey, two phone interviews, and a reflective prompt as the methods of data collection. The IRB approval letter is shown in Appendix A. This study was grounded in narrative research design. “Narrative research designs are qualitative procedures in which researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about these individuals’ lives, and write narratives about their experiences” (Creswell, 2012, p. 22). For the purpose of this study the main focus of the narratives produced for these women’s lives were discussed in the context of their work life and how it impacts their lived experiences in the areas surrounding the campus. Creswell (2012) defines the seven stages or major characteristics which are specific to narrative research as

including: “individual experiences, chronology of the experiences, collecting individual stories, restorying, coding for themes, context or setting, and collaborating with participants” (p. 507). These characteristics were utilized to guide this study from the recruitment process through the written narrative produced. Cortazzi (1993) discusses narrative research in the context of teachers sharing their experiences and meaning-making capabilities through storytelling. The three factors discussed can be transferable and utilizable to other professions outside of teaching, and therefore was applicable to this study. The factors of narrative inquiry which were inferred from Cortazzi (1993) include: a need for reflection, an understanding of knowledge, as it pertains to what one knows and how one obtains their ways of knowing, and the empowerment component, which seeks liberation through the sharing of a story. This reflection which leads to knowledge production and understanding, can lead to an empowering and transformative experience in which participants who in some ways were mistreated or victimized can seek rejuvenation and power through sharing their story.

This research design fits with the tradition of both written and oral accounts of stories passed down. “Since the beginning of time, storytelling has been an important event in the African and African American communities. Through storytelling, questions were answered, history was conveyed, and life lessons were taught and learned” (Wilson, 2002, p. 1). This form of expression in the Black community is reflected in the findings section. To ensure authenticity it was the hope of the researcher that “while reading each story the reader will be able to hear the storyteller’s voice and be fascinated by it and will spread the words to others” (Gross & Barnes, 1989, pp. 13-14). The stories and the participants’ meaning-making of their experiences were shared with creativity and in a manner which was unique and genuine to the individual.

## **Participants**



Two Black women who have completed a student affairs masters-level preparatory program were recruited, through my own network of academic professionals, to participate in this narrative study. I ensured that these women were regionally different. Both women were from different regions, pursued their undergraduate and graduate education in different regions, and voluntarily terminated their employment in different geographical regions of the country.

Two Black women were selected, because for this particular research design a smaller sample size is common. Creswell (2012) discusses the intentions of the narrative researcher as not being “interested in describing and interpreting group behavior or ideas, or in developing an explanation grounded in the experiences of many individuals. Instead you wish to tell the stories of one or two individuals” (pp.21-22). The intentions of this study was not to attempt to utilize the data collected to provide a generalization or mono-narrative, but to instead tell the stories of these Black women and their holistic and personalized experiences which led to their ultimate voluntary termination of employment from PWIs.

### **Measures to reduce risks to participants.**

As one of the driving principles, this study sought to provide a voice for Black women who are employed at PWIs; however not at the expense or detriment of those who are currently employed at their institutions. It is important to realize the consequences and challenges of speaking out against oppression while simultaneously occupying the same space in which the injustice is being committed. There are potential life changing risks if the participants are discovered speaking out including further harassment, ridicule, denial of justified promotions, and financial despair because of losing their job or being blacklisted in the professional community. In addition to these possibilities, participants can also be subjected to the potential

psychological impact of engaging in this critical and reflective study while simultaneously occupying the space which is deemed problematic and unhealthy. Those thoughts led to my own deep reflection on the sample in which data was collected. To help conceptualize the concerns of vulnerability, hooks (1994) discusses the frequent lack of engagement or revolt some Black women experience due to fear or concern for their own detriment or increased maltreatment.

Black women change the process only to the degree that we are in revolt against the prevailing process. However, the vast majority of Black women in *academe* are *not* in revolt—they seem to be as conservative as other conservatizing forces there! Why? Because marginalized groups in institutions feel so vulnerable. I’ve been thinking a lot about how often I feel more policed by other Black women who say to me: “How can you be out there on the edge? How can you do certain things, like be wild, be inappropriate? You’re making it harder for the rest of us (who are trying to show that we can be ‘up to snuff’) to be ‘in’ with the mainstream (p. 233).

Some people can internalize or interpret this quotation as disrespectful or creating a duality where on one side you have the Black women who are known for challenging systems of oppression head on and those who choose to quietly accept or remain less action-oriented about challenging or addressing their positionality in a gendered racist environment. To overcome the dilemma of potentially putting an already disenfranchised and vulnerable population in even more potential harm, the participants in this study were voluntarily separated from the PWIs in which they contemplated leaving, and ultimately left. This study achieved the goal of gaining a deeper and more holistic understanding of the factors that contribute to contemplations of leaving PWIs, but not at the detriment or risk of the participants involved.

## **Data Collection**

Data collection involved four different phases. Each phase and the data collection instruments are described in this section.

### **Phase 1: Questionnaire.**

The link to the first data collection tool, created using SurveyGizmo, was sent in an email to each participant. The questionnaire is depicted in Appendix B. The first page of the survey included the consent form. Each participant was required to read and accept the terms and conditions stated on the consent form before proceeding to the survey items. Once the participant clicked *accept*, she was asked to respond to both open and closed ended items used to obtain information about the participant and the institution from which she voluntarily departed. At the conclusion of the survey, each participant was asked to provide dates and times in which the first phone interview could take place. Upon receiving the surveys from each individual, I responded with an email to confirm the day and time the first interview was scheduled to be conducted.

***Measures to ensure institutional confidentiality.***

Multiple measures were taken during the data collection process to ensure that the participants' institutions would remain confidential. It was an important goal of the researcher to not be detrimental to the reputation of the institutions discussed in the study. The survey did not include an item asking for the name of the college/university or other uniquely identifiable factors about the institution. In the consent form participants were notified and reminded that disclosing the institution is not being requested by the researcher or required to produce the narratives. Instead of encouraging disclosure of the institution, a list of items in the survey was utilized to determine the institutional type, geographical location, and general period of founding. To determine the institutional type, a component of the questionnaire asked the participants to disclose the classification from a list of items commonly defined types of institutions and institutional markers. Items pertaining to the geographical location were utilized to provide a context for the institution and the city in which the participants worked. The cities

or states of the institutions discussed were not revealed as a preventative measure. The time period of founding was an approximation of the founding within a decade. This measure was also taken to minimize identifying the institution. Obtaining the founding timeframe was important in providing a better understanding of the racial climate in the United States, towards Black women in particular, during the founding of the particular institution. One of the institutions was founded a few years after the Civil War and the other institution was founded at the end of the Civil Rights Movement. This information is helpful in understanding that the two institutions are situated in times of elevated racial turmoil in this country. The institutional classifying component of the questionnaire which was utilized to provide a context used close-ended items to further ensure identifiable information was not mistakenly disclosed.

### **Phase 2: First phone interview.**

Two phone interviews were conducted with each participant. Each interview was guided by a semi-structured interview protocol. The protocol used for the first phone interview is shown in Appendix C. This allowed the participants flexibility to elaborate on whatever they wished. The decision to conduct phone interviews was made for several reasons. A phone conversation provided convenience for both the participants and the researcher. It also allowed for more privacy than an interview conducted in person, especially if conducted in a public space.

The first phone interview took place within a few days after the survey was completed. The purpose of this interview was for the participant and the researcher to become more acquainted with each other and to instill a level of trustworthiness. The questions asked in the first interview addressed personal information not asked in the survey. At the end of the approximately forty-five minute phone discussion the second interview was scheduled.

### **Phase 3: Second phone interview.**

The second phone interview took place within a day or two after the first phone interview. The structure of the second interview based on the three theoretical perspectives: Critical Race Theory, Africana Womanism, and Historical Womanist, and Burton's World Health Organization (WHO) Healthy Workplace framework. The protocol for the second interview is shown in Appendix D. In this interview, the questions were designed to explore the factors which contribute to contemplations of leaving or potential retention related to the physical work environment, psychosocial work environment, personal health resources, and enterprise community. The information obtained in the second interview was more specifically geared towards providing an understanding of the circumstances and factors which contributed to the participants' contemplation of leaving and ultimate voluntary termination. Based on the nature of the questions the interview exceeded one hour. At the end of the conversation, the participant was instructed to anticipate an email which contained the phone interview transcriptions and the final reflective prompt.

### **Phase 4: Reflective prompt.**

The final data collection tool was a reflective prompt (Appendix E) which was sent via SurveyGizmo to each participant. Each participant was asked to respond within one week. This component of data collection was written in a manner in which the participant deemed fit. Using one's creativity was allowed and appreciated as the participants reflect on their experience participating in this study.

### ***Member checking.***

One purpose of this phase was for the participant to have a chance to read over the interview transcription to determine the accuracy and to provide any changes or elaboration. This part of the process served as member checking. A process used in qualitative research to insure the accuracy and validity of the researcher, especially if an interview was a method utilized (Byrne, 2001). This process also provided the participant with a written account of the phone interviews, for their own personal records.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The participants were selected using my own network of professionals in higher education. This can be a limitation to the study in that who I am and who I am connected to in the field of higher education in many ways dictated who the two participants were and who they knew. The geographical locations in which these women are from, attended school, and worked reflect the trends of my network. I am a woman from the east coast, attended an undergraduate institution in a southern state, pursued graduate degrees at two institutions in the Midwest, and worked professionally in higher education in the South and Midwest. The spaces in which I occupied in many ways coincided with where my network is located. This to some degree can be seen as a limitation because my network, and therefore the regions of the country from which the participants were chosen, was limited to the South and the Midwest.

Another limitation included the number of opportunities for dialogue during the data collection process. This study was designed to have four phases, a questionnaire, two phone interviews, and a reflective prompt. The first phone interview represented the first time I verbally spoke to the each participant for the means of collecting data. The phone interview became more of a conversation to become more acquainted with each other and to gain trust.

The second interview was therefore much longer and covered more in-depth and specific information about the experiences which led to their voluntary departure. There was a lot to discuss and unpack in the second phone interview. Including more opportunities for dialogue could have provided more time for participants to share their stories and to have time in between to further reflect on their experiences. Additional times for dialogue could have potentially strengthened the narratives and subsequently this study.

The information was self-reported which could have potentially been an inaccurate account of what happened. This could stem from the time which separated the participants from their departure. Both women were removed from the place in which they voluntarily terminated their employment for less than one year at the time of data collection; however one of the participants was employed at the position for close to a decade. Therefore, her recount of experiences and ability to chronicle events may be more challenging because of the time-lapse.

Another possibility is that the participants could have also shared information that they thought I wanted to hear after recognizing the nature of the topic I was researching. The notion of providing inaccurate information or formulating their responses in a way which coincides with what is believed to be the researcher's wants seemed to be unlikely, however that is another potential limitation when working with participants in qualitative research.

The study was successful in chronicling the stories of two Black women. Because of the nature of this narrative study, only these individuals' stories are shared. Although the women were different the institution types were similar, in that they were both research intensive four year public institutions with over 35,000 students. The biggest differences between the institutions were their locations, founding years, and unique histories. One institution is located

in the Midwest and was founded shortly after the Civil War and the other university was founded in the 1960s in the South. Having other institutional types represented and geographical regions can be helpful in better understanding this topic and the multiplicity of how different geographical regions and types of colleges and universities can impact experiences.

## **Analysis**

Black women are not a monolithic group and the intent of this study was not to characterize their experiences as homogeneous, or use one narrative to define the experience of Black women at PWIs. “In qualitative inquiry, researchers do not make predictions about findings. They are more interested in whether the findings of a study support or modify existing ideas and practices advanced in the literature” (Creswell, 2012, p. 81). Instead of generalizing, this study looked for patterns and themes which are similar and unique amongst the individual participants. An in-depth analysis of the participants’ experiences is depicted in Chapter 5. With the help of the interview questions, derived from the theoretical perspectives of Critical Race Theory, Africana Womanism, Historical Womanist, and the WHO Healthy Workplace framework, the limited research on the experiences of non-faculty Black women will be expanded. “Narratives are useful in research precisely because storytellers interpret the past rather than reproduce it as it was. The ‘truths’ of narrative accounts are not in their faithful representations of a past world, but in the shifting connections they forge among past, present, and future” (Riessman, 2003, p. 6). The uniqueness of each participant was discussed through a narrative constructed in the findings section. Analyzing and sharing each participant’s story provided a more comprehensive understanding of the various unique experiences non-faculty Black women faced at predominantly White colleges and universities.



### **Transcription.**

After the interviews were completed, the transcription process took place. This required me to sit for hours transcribing the interviews, which were recorded on a digital recorder. With all the stopping and revisiting of the data recorded, I was able to become very familiar with the women's stories. While listening and typing out each word recorded, I was also able to take some time to think about the themes and how the stories fit with the theoretical lens.

### **Themes.**

During the transcription process some themes were revealed, however a more focused and systematic search for themes occurred after transcribing was completed. The themes of First Generation, The Academy's Celebration of Qualities Associated with the Mammy, Companionship, Contemplation, and Lessons are discussed in Chapter 5. While reviewing the data I also read each interview to see how each participant's story connected with the theoretical framework and perspectives which guided this study. I looked for areas of the participants' stories in which they provided elements connected to Critical Race Theory, Africana Womanism, and Historical Womanist. The areas which connected to the physical work environment, psychosocial work environment, personal health resources, and enterprise community were easier to see given the specific questions which were asked that were stimulated by the WHO Healthy Workspace theoretical framework. The perspectives are embedded in stories represented in Chapter 4 and are further discussed in Chapter 6.

The structure of the findings section is in the form of a story. The participants and their individual responses are constructed to be in conversation with each other. This *dialogue* is a combination of the participants' words and my own conceptualization of the participants'

experiences. In this section some of my own experiences are also present along with pertinent instances in literature which strengthened the understanding of the participants' experiences.

The findings section was meant to be written in a more creative manner that supports the notion of narrative composition and storytelling.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

The findings section is meant to be presented creatively. Gina and Allison Jamie are the pseudonyms the women selected for themselves. All other information represents the women's true identity. This section is divided into five sections. The first section is the foundation of the fictional encounter between the participants and researcher. The second and third sections are Gina and Allison Jamie's stories respectively. I organized the stories, but the stories reflect these women's words. Each story is in her voice; her voice brings authenticity to her own experiences. The fourth section is my story. I talked about my own experiences at the institution from which I voluntarily terminated my employment. I used both Gina and Allison Jamie's stories as a springboard to discuss pertinent aspects of my experience at my former institution. The fifth section serves as the conclusion to the fictionalized encounter.

### **Wanted Guests at the Table**

I sat down at the same table as usual on Saturdays. I began to be productive on my dissertation writing. I must keep going because I know I am not one to start something and not finish it. Today I will be productive and one day closer to becoming Dr. Jovaughn Barnard. I put on some reggae and began to catch my writing rhythm. I glanced at the clock and an hour had passed since I begin sitting at the table. The time was now 8:35am. I took a sip of water and continued to listen to my music and type.

I glanced up from my computer and saw two Black women walking towards the table near me. It did not appear that they knew each other. The two women sat at the table across from me. One of the women had some sheets of paper and a digital recorder in her hand. After both of the women were seated one of the women immediately began to read from her paper. I did not mean to eavesdrop but I was curious to see what these women were planning to do.

After the woman read the instructions, I was able to realize that these women were about to discuss their experiences and the factors which ultimately led to them voluntarily terminating their employment at a predominantly White college or university.

The first woman introduced herself by talking into the recording device, yet still looking at the woman sitting across from her:

Gina: I am a woman of African ancestry and of Haitian decent. I also identify as a Black woman. I am 28 years old and work in higher education. I consider myself a professional of over three years in higher education. I also have a master's degree from a large PWI and have also worked at the university in student affairs while studying there. I began my undergraduate career at a historically Black institution. I had a great time there which made my want to enter the field. Throughout my career both as a student and professional, I have had a diverse range of experiences, which helped to inform my current view of the field as well as my identity as a Black woman within spaces in higher education. That's how I would describe myself. My main work in higher education has been in residence life and academic advising.

After she finished talking, the other woman who was in her early thirties began to talk.

Allison Jamie: I am an African American woman, I am a first generation college student, I have an Ed.D., I am gainfully employed, I am a wife, a step mother, a respected member of my church, I'm a daughter, and I have to be a great big sister. I am originally from Mississippi. My whole family is originally from Mississippi, but I have been in this state since 1993.

I sit back to watch these two Black women who are coming together to share their stories, with a smile on my face. Although I know what they were about to share was not going to be easy, I did know that they were together in solidarity as Black women who for whatever reason had enough with the PWI they were once employed and ultimately decided to leave. It was great to see two Black women have a conversation with each other who would not have likely met otherwise. One woman is from the east coast with Haitian parents and another from the Deep South. Although, I was from Annapolis, Maryland we were connected in our Black womanhood.

We were all also first generation college students and each voluntarily terminated our employment at PWIs.

I tried not to look at them much. I did not want to be exposed, and have them find out that I was listening to their conversation, but I could not hide the fact that I was excited that I had the privilege to hear these women actively engaging in a much needed discussion. As a Black woman who voluntarily terminated my employment at a predominantly White institution because of circumstances which pertained to gendered racism, I too have a story to tell, but I will keep quiet and listen to their stories. At this table they were no longer unwanted guests. They were appreciated and embraced in each other's sight. It was beautiful even though I was sure that they were about to discuss some challenging experiences.

Gina read the prompt and began to talk. I listened in while the two women talked.

Gina: My parents are immigrants from Haiti. They worked very hard to ensure and help their children go through education and "become something" in society to achieve academic and financial success. I believe the push to be something greater and the fact that I grew up in an area where there weren't as many opportunities, made me want to strive for the best. When they heard about the university I gained a job offer from after graduating with my masters, and that it was a great school, they only wanted the best. So to them that meant going to an institution that was considered prestigious, and to have an opportunity to be exposed to something outside of my normal experience. In their mind, a PWI would be a great experience professionally and would probably help increase my mobility. So I would say, just the idea of where you work, if you work at a prestigious institution that means you somehow made it. I think this is what encouraged me. My parents did not focus on doing what you love. They did not focus on finding a path that you really enjoy and feeling like you were being led intuitively when deciding on a position. They were more focused on making sure that whatever you choose, it would help financially; it will help improve the situation of not just yourself but your family. Family and social responsibility should impact your decision-making. So if I am going to get a job, I am going to make sure that it is something that is financially sound, and can help me provide more opportunities for others. Now, as I have matriculated throughout my career, I have been able to enlighten and expand their thinking to see other ways to look at career decision-making. Still, I maintain their values of hard work and financial

responsibility, within, because there is wisdom in that. My point to them is that there should be a balance.

Gina paused for a second and continued to talk.

Gina: Intuitively I could say that I was always focused on really getting into what I liked to do. I don't like to spend time doing things that don't speak to me and I am not interested in. Because I would quickly, if I wasn't interested in something, especially when I was younger, I would just go off and do something else, or just quit, or just stop. To them, it is more about knowing your responsibility and going through with it. But for me I knew I had to have a greater purpose for what I was doing. So I would say that it is different in that I question whether I can tolerate this job, do I enjoy who I am working with, is this something that I am doing not just for money but to enhance the greater good of society. I want to be happy in my job. I don't want the job to make me happy, but I want to be happy doing it. If I did not have my student loans, I would probably had left sooner. I would have probably just left sooner, but because I knew that I had financial responsibilities I stayed a little longer.

After Gina finished talking she passed the recording device to Allison Jamie, who immediately started to talk.

Allison Jamie: My father may have graduated high school. He went to the Navy, but he did not like authority so that did not work out for him. But my father is a hard worker. He has worked, has worked in construction and cementing since as long as I can remember. He gets up every day. He has an alarm that goes off at 4, 5, 6, and 7am. When you see him you would not know that he is 52 years old. He looks young and he does not mind working hard for the things that he wants. My mother works hard but it is often overlooked. People will often take advantage of the fact that she loves to work hard. I do not mind the hard work. I do not mind going above and beyond, but I do not like to feel taken advantage of or under appreciated. I am not one that you have to pat me on the back all the time, but it is important to have some recognition, even if it is thanks for doing that. I do not need a plaque or a certificate every time I turn in something, but I also need gentle reminders that you understand that I am working hard. I have learned to be assertive. So I have learned to stand up for myself. I believe you work hard you play hard. That worked for me. So I have seen both where working hard can benefit you and when working hard people can take advantage of you. I have a strong work ethic, but no I will not wake up at 4 o'clock in the morning to be nowhere, not even for a flight. I do what is required of me and there are times when I go above and beyond, but I do not feel absolutely obligated every day to go a thousand yards past the finish line. I think it is important to complete tasks. My mom and dad never said it but they believe in

excellence. You go to work, you do your job, and you do it well. You do not make excuses, you just get it done. I do believe in that. I am definitely not one to be here at 5 in the morning and closing the door down at 10 at night that is not me.

I sat at the table and thought about what these two women were saying. Both of these women discussed having different views on working and work ethic, when compared to their parents. This suggests a potential generational difference, where the older generation is more connected to the financial component of a position, whereas their offspring are searching for more of a sense of purpose and happiness in their jobs while also being mindful of their financial responsibilities. This makes me wonder if their parents would have had contemplations of leaving and actually followed through on leaving their position if they endured the experiences which ultimately led to these women voluntarily terminating their employment.

Another interesting part of this conversation is the notion of institutional prestige and how far the name and reputation of an institution can take you. I feel like many people have a set of expectations and believe you have a certain amount of knowledge and depth of experience because of your institution. I often wonder if these institutions gained their prestige and reputation on being in opposition to Blackness or a promoter of Whiteness. What about predominantly White institutions makes them so elite and prestigious? Was it because they were indeed, excellent and better than the rest, or was it that they had White privilege at their foundation and could use it as their leverage? I was doing it again, I was getting lost in my thoughts and not listening to the women at the table next to me. Gina continued to discuss why she decided to apply to the position at a public four-year research intensive institution in the Midwest. Gina's institution had an extensive diversity statement and has supported conversations on race and other controversial topics on campus. The campus has made strides to be inclusive and open to the campus community through having these discussions. The campus

also has summer research opportunities specifically for students of color. The institution was founded in the years following the Civil War, in a majority White town in a rural setting.

Gina: Several years back, in 2008, I completed a summer research internship at the University, so that was a summer research internship that was focused on access for students of color. I was surrounded by underrepresented students from around the country. I had a great experience, so I referred back to that experience. I never really thought about going out to the Midwest, but it looks like I am applying to jobs on the east coast and I am not getting any responses. So after speaking to a professor she encouraged me to apply in the Midwest and the South, to get more replies back. So the fact that I had a positive experience in the summer internship at that University really encouraged me to apply and so I thought that was also an added advantage when I applied since I was able to draw upon my experiences there in my cover letter.

She then discussed what led to her accepting the position at the University she ultimately decided to leave.

Gina: It was during the holidays and the year was dwindling down and I really needed a job. I am quite adventurous so I was willing to try something new, the great thing is that I had already had an experience over there and for some reason I felt like it would be a great experience because of the relational aspects that existed during the summer research internship, and the people that I met there. So in my mind, I was like I'm going to go work over there and it was going to be great [laugh] and not thinking that those were two separate experiences. And also I had contacted someone who was familiar with the department and they encouraged me to apply and told me the positives and negatives, but I felt that I still wanted to try something new and different. It was good to know that I had someone to connect with once I got there, so that really helped me to say you know what, let's go.

As an adventurous person myself, I can also attest to leaving the comfort and familiarity of the east coast not once but twice to advance vocationally and educationally. I never knew I would ever step foot in the state of Iowa. After crossing over the Iowa border and seeing the welcome to Iowa sign with the slogan of *Fields of Opportunities*, I knew that plants, trees, and vegetation were not going to be the only things growing in this state. I would be able to grow,



and left that space a better me. So when the opportunity presented itself I left the east coast, yet again, to grow in the Midwest.

Allison Jamie immediately started speaking after Gina. She went on to discuss why she decided to apply and accept the position at the institution she ultimately voluntarily terminated. The institution Allison Jamie voluntarily terminated her employment from is a four-year research intensive university located in the south, in a state on the Gulf of Mexico. The institution has a diversity statement that speaks to inclusivity; however there does not appear to be any campus-wide conversations about race or other social identities. The institution was founded in the 1960s, in a majority White city.

Allison Jamie: The reason why I applied for the position at that time is because it was a new position. No one had ever been in it. It was just created and it focused on helping first generation and underrepresented minorities. It was a perfect fit for me, because I fell in that category as a student. I decided that I would go for it. I was working on my master's degree and I wanted to get into my field and not just be a receptionist. So when I saw the description, I said this is perfect and exactly what I want to do. I was like the third person who was offered the position, so two people before me had turned it down. I accepted it because I wanted to do what others had done for me. At the time I did not know that the job had been offered to two or three other people, so when I applied for it and actually got it I was like oh it must have been God.

Hearing these women share their stories reminded me of my own experiences of why I applied and accepted the position at the institution I ultimately left. I wanted to go to an institution where I can continue to inspire and help students and also have access to professional development and the ability to pursue my academic goals. When I saw an opening at the institution I was very excited and felt drawn to it. In fact I felt so connected that after submitting my application materials I stopped job searching. A few weeks later I was on campus interviewing. I felt good about moving and working at the institution. When the call came in to

offer me the position I was ready and accepted right away. It all seemed to divinely fall into place. I was, yet again, moving back to the Midwest to grow.

### **Through Gina's Words: The Weather Wasn't The Only Thing That Was Cold**

My experience as a Black woman in society has been one of constantly trying to assert myself, trying to find my place, and constantly experiencing a battle. There are so many layers as Black women we have to attend to, layers that we have to reach, plus we have to advocate for everyone around us including family. We are everything to everybody and then our families want us to get a good education, achieve a good job, and reach high status. But they don't know what that means for us Black women in America. It's almost like in addition to that, we also have our family obligations, and we are usually the ones people come to when they are experiencing issues. In the higher education workspace we are more to our students than just advisors, we go above and beyond our job description. So that, in addition to the institutional racism and the institutional requirements that we must oblige to, makes it hard.

Going to this institution there were so many ways that it was a culture shock. As I mentioned my background, growing up in a Haitian family, my hometown being predominantly Black, Caribbean background, and going to an HBCU, and having experiences at institutions which were either smaller or they had more diverse populations. For graduate school, I went to an institution which was similar, to this institution which I left, but there were still differences, regionally. It was more on the east coast, more diversity, and acceptance. However, this institution was more homogenous, racially, culturally, and I felt like it lacked diversity and regionally it was very different. So in many ways I felt like I just landed somewhere that was very much different in every way from what I experienced. This helped me to learn a lot about myself.

In the interview, before I got the job, I felt like they made it seem as though they wanted to get to know who I was and would be accepting of that and help me to contribute to enhance and enrich the department. They did not say that, however that is the message that I gathered at the interview, but when I got there it was almost as if people were shocked. When they sit down to get to know me, it was not because they were really interested in me. It was not like that, it was more like who is she? It was more like oh my God you're a vegetarian? Why, how? Oh wow your parents are from where? Oh wow this is your experience? Or having them question me about, so why did you go to an HBCU? What made you go there, is that a well-known school?

What they would put up on their walls or in their offices wasn't inclusive. In terms of the department, I felt like if you wanted to be in an advising space, that was already lacking in diversity that there were certain pictures that are cultural and represent a diverse population or just inclusive. There really wasn't any kind of art; that is what I am trying to say. There was no art, that when you walked into the department that indicates that this space is really eclectic, they are inviting. So there might be a flyer here and there that has students of color in it, but you could just walk in and it felt less of a human space.

The office had very very bright light that was very intrusive and felt more like a medical facility than an actual place where students can feel comfortable and not feel like they were being kind of on edge. I felt like that made me feel on edge. What was even worst was that advisors were expected to have, the supervisor expected me to have the same bright lights in my office. So already not having a window, and I need fresh air, I need to have and be able to see outside. Not having that already impacted me, because that would help to kind of, it would allow me to think and relax, and to you know be myself. I felt that me not having a window really

impacted my work. It made me have an imbalance in terms of my work experience. So for lunch, I am ready to go out. I am ready to leave the office, I am ready to leave the whole premises, because I needed that energy, I needed the sun. And so not having that already, I felt like I was closed in, and it has a mindset of do as you are told, get the job done, and focus on the job and not okay you can look outside and kind of focus on something else.

I couldn't do those bright lights so I had my own dim lights, but they gave me issues about it even though there were other advisors, some of them senior advisors and White, were sitting in darker spaces. But for me to have dim lighting, it was an issue. This really impacted me. I put up some stuff in my office that spoke to me culturally, maybe spiritually, and anything that spoke to who I am. I felt like people would either have something to say about it, comment not in a way that they want to know about it because they think it is interesting but they just wanted to kind of show me that what I was doing is something different. Kind of like why do you have that symbol up? Hmmm your room looks kind of interesting. When they really felt like it wasn't normal for me to have up the spiritual piece or to have up pictures of leaders that look like me.

A positive about the space, was that we all had our own offices so we weren't in cubicles. So I had my own space, which I found that that was very helpful. Even at times when I was frustrated or when I did not feel like I fit in at my job, I could push my door, even though they did not want me to push my door, I would push my door back and take a breather and maybe put some music on.

There was contemplation from when I first started back in January. I started at the beginning of the year, and I was contemplating. I began doubting about the third week. From

the beginning I felt like it was an agenda. From the beginning of working in the department, it was almost as if they had set up other African Americans who were professionals on campus, there weren't that many, it was like a set up to kind of situate and to orient me to the University and to help orient me to the department and to kind of construct how my experiences would be at the University. I was encouraged to join certain organizations, and in an abrupt way people would pull me to the side and reach out to me. I was thinking that they were reaching out to me because they want to know who I am and they really want to feel me out. But it was almost as if I was being, you know as if they were trying to put me into a certain box and who I communicated with. There were certain people, who were interested in how I spent my time and how to deal with situations. I felt like I was almost being told that if something went down or if I felt mistreated in the department that I should go to them and not make a big deal about it and to not go to certain people, don't talk to anyone else. It was very interesting how strategic they were in utilizing people who looked like me, who came in a way that they were going to support me, but when they were in fact supporting me under the condition that I followed certain rules. I found that very interesting, and so when I decided that I wasn't going to do those certain things and I wasn't going to follow people's instructions, I was often penalized for it. For whom I spoke to and how I was outspoken. Those things really impacted my experiences.

I really felt like I was more of a face, a token for the department. The department wasn't diverse in the sense that there wasn't strong racial diversity. So I already felt that way even though we had an African American male in the department and one Hispanic female. I often felt in meetings and conversations that what I had to offer really didn't matter and that I was really there for a show. That really impacted my experience there, in terms of really being able to relate to my colleagues and to feel as if I was a part of a team.

I think number one is being viewed as a colleague that deserves to be there, that we belong as a part of the whole team. I think that the issue is the reality that we don't fit in. A lot of the time we are the only Black woman or person of color in our department or maybe one of few and so because of that, we are constantly clashing in the areas of values and how we communicate with each other and how we go about our day-to-day life. What do I need, what do they need, what do they think is important, and how do I adopt their own worldview? Their worldview enters the workplace and so when you are sitting in at a meeting you are constantly reminding yourself that everything that I say, I am representing the Black woman. I am always reminding myself, I wear locs, so I have to remind myself of the stereotypes associated with that.

I wear locs. I just felt like it was almost like my hair was some form of entertainment. They seemed to be always be interested in what was going on with my hair. That was also an issue I had to bring that up and let them know that that was not appropriate.

People are looking at me and my hair, looking at how different I am based on my skin color, plus I am a female. I just constantly feel like I am not a part of that team. Whatever I say can be held against me, misconstrued, and viewed as not being assertive but aggressive. Our opinions aren't valued. Black women are always told that we need to try harder, dress better than everyone else but when we do we are called cute and a fashionista, someone who cares too much about fashion as my white colleagues often look like they're going to a picnic. When I say look better, I mean that even our families tell us that we should look a certain way to be taken seriously. Our mentors tell us that we need to look professional and be on point in all areas. Your hair needs to be neat, your clothes need to be professional, you have to have your makeup on, your A-game on every single day. Why? Because while we as Black women may have our own cultural ways of dressing or wearing our hair; I can't be myself. If I came to work dressing

casual, even business casual at some places, it would be viewed as if I don't care enough or that I am more threatening as a black woman in the workplace. Plus I have to be pleasant and smiling all the time. That's what keeps people feeling comfortable around me and I think that makes it challenging and keeps us disadvantaged in the workplace.

I mentioned before the awe people would have about my locs in my hair. I would walk around; it was always comments about what I was wearing. It was not negative, but it was almost like, oh my gosh your outfit is so cute, oh my gosh you're so cute; she is like a walking wardrobe. I just brought two suitcases over there; I really didn't think I was a fashionista or anything. Most people would say that it is not a big deal, about them complimenting me, but I became more of an object, a cute little object. I constantly felt like someone was going to say something, just to point out that I was coming from something different. They don't do that to each other, and I kept thinking is it their fault? Maybe not, because they are not used to seeing others, other people from different areas in that space. That impacted me, it made me feel constantly surveilled and out of place, but then at the same time they wanted me to be social beyond the working environment. They wanted to get to know me and really hang out, and I just didn't. I didn't trust them; the trust wasn't there because I didn't feel like they were really genuine. It was their way of showing me that they really like me, but yet in meetings and when I had something to say what I had to say was not looked at as being important. So it was like an oxymoron and very contradictory. I think there's a fine line, in terms of wanting to have a happy environment, but the people there did not seem like they were happy people and they didn't seem like they really wanted me there. Why put up a front and smile? One minute you say hello, then the next day you don't even want to look at me. I like to be consistent, that's one thing they were very inconsistent. That threw me off.

I felt constantly surveilled and watched. All of the offices had like a glass window near the door where you can see what was happening inside the office. I just really felt like people didn't trust what I was doing or if I was doing everything correctly. I know that me being new was a contributing factor, but I feel like there needed to be a balance and there it really wasn't. A balance as it relates to them treating me as a professional. I think my body, my Black female body within my office space was not one that was trusted and allowed to be free. The senior level staff would often walk back and forth, peek in, and peek their heads through the window trying to see what I was doing on my computer. From what I gathered with other advisors they were not experiencing the same issues with trust and surveillance. They were more so left alone.

I felt closed-in at my job and I was being surveilled, I wasn't trusted. I couldn't really get out like I wanted to, I wanted to step out and I couldn't really step out or I had to have a reason to step out. To me it was all about getting the job done and I would get the job done. It's another thing when you are constantly being watched and people treating you like they don't see value in who you are or what you are capable of. So at the time, I thought you want me to speak up in meetings, you want me to go out to lunch, you want me to spend my time on the weekends with you, and spend time outside of the office with you, but yet I already knew that what I had to say and what my colleagues, the African American male and Hispanic woman in my department, had to say was not being held at as high esteem when compared to what everyone else had to say.

Diversity is important because I enjoy working with all students, but I also want to acknowledge that I also want to work with students who look like me and not have to feel like I can't. I want to be able to work with them, and work with them how I want to. That environment was very restrictive and very controlled. One more thing I would like to add is that



a lot of times we are hired in spaces where they want us to get involved on diversity projects and diversity issues, but no one else cares about it. What's worse is the initiatives my Black colleague and I must put forth for diversity purposes often do not get supported and issues do not ever get solved. It's like we are doing this to say that we are just doing it.

In the beginning, my main purpose for entering the field of higher education was based on my experiences in my undergraduate institution, a small HBCU. That's why I went into the field. I found myself at a large PWI. So far all of my experiences at PWIs have been unpleasant. So I would say that on my first instinct, I wanted to give up on all higher ed and student affairs. I said it wasn't for me. It wasn't something that I want to do. I really do not like the field of student affairs and higher ed in general. What came to mind was, hold on, I did not come to the field for all this. I did not come to the field to be in such spaces, and if I did come to work in such spaces there are certain things I shouldn't have to deal with. There are certain things certain people who are not a Black woman or a person of color would understand. They don't have to wake up in the morning, look in the mirror, and say to themselves okay Black woman, get ready for what may come today. Why should I have to deal with that? My experiences in undergrad, even as a student I knew that was the type of environment I wanted to go back to. I think I had to realize that higher ed student affairs in general as a field is not what we thought or what we were trained to think it was. We are all making a difference in student's lives, we try but as a whole there are a lot of politics in many departments that do not align with my values, which get in the way of us actually making a difference. So for the most part it's negative, but I am reminded why I went to the field and there are certain niches or areas in higher ed, such as particular institutions that serve students who I was like as a college student, who I share a similar background with. I think working in those spaces will be a better experience. I have not

given up 100% on the field, but for the most part I am not happy about higher education administration in general.

There was an African American man who was hired at the same time I was hired and the whole time I was able to witness firsthand behind his back how they would talk about him and how they would talk about him being a new professional in the office and his mistakes. Something very trivial would really be blown out of proportion. Things were often said to the director; reported in a very unnecessary manner. He [the African American man] was never really confronted himself to improve, it was more about let's let the director know what's going on so that the director could come at him a certain way. And so that happened with my colleague, so over time I noticed that the same things were going on with me. I noticed that things were being said to my supervisor, that I had said or have done that wasn't even true. There was a lot of unfairness, in terms of procedure and there was no consistency of how we would follow protocol. I knew that other people would do something one way as it pertains to their job, but when I went ahead and was working there were often restrictions on my time and how I worked with students and if I spent extra time with students I was often penalized for it.

Community wise, there was really nothing that would have contributed to making me stay. I would get on the bus to go to work and students and families would get on the bus and look at me and not want to sit near me. I was like wow and it really made me understand that they had stereotypes about Black women, about Black women with locs. It was like they didn't want to look at us or be near us. When I would go out to a restaurant, I went out to eat with a colleague and I remember sitting there and I had already picked up the vibe that people are more to themselves and closed-minded. They were friendly, Midwest nice, and would talk more but it's like it not really genuine.

I went to this other restaurant and I remember going in there and it felt so, it felt very White in a sense that I was like a black dot there. I remember people would look at me and think that I was very untrusting. There was an older woman who was looking at me like I wasn't supposed to be there. And there was a mother who had her child and they were sitting at the table in front of me. She left her daughter at the table and she kept looking back and looking at me. Not to look at the daughter to see if she was okay, but was looking at me and I was right behind her daughter. As if to say she better not touch my daughter or do anything. I was the only Black woman there and they did not trust the fact that her daughter was near me.

I think just being on the campus and entering public spaces, like a university bank I entered one day. I may have mentioned this before, but I really had to prove and express myself for so long that I was in fact a staff member on campus to take advantage of the staff benefits of opening a banking account through that campus bank. Even though I had a staff ID, and they treated me like I was an unimportant student posing as a campus employee. Maybe they thought I was a student because of my height, I am short, but I also feel like it coupled with me being a Black woman, maybe I looked like a 16 year old since I was wearing jeans and some sandals that day. I still expressed multiple times that I worked here as an advisor. He did not want to believe me when I told him that I work on campus. He thought I was a student, but I ensured him that I actually worked on campus as an advisor. He was like, can I see your ID. I showed him my staff ID, and he was like some people can still have faculty and staff IDs and not actually be faculty and staff, is there any other way you can prove to me that you are staff here? According to the personal banker, too often summer or visiting student researchers get staff IDs and that they would not be able to open an account under staff. When I persisted, he asked me, what department? There was no level of trust between me and this young White male. I then gave up

and told the teller that I would find myself another bank as I felt disrespected. I ended up leaving and saying forget it I'm not going to do this anymore, because I was really upset and I felt like I was being questioned because I was a Black woman.

I felt that way just being on campus, especially when there were faculty and staff meetings, or campus wide professional development workshops on campus. I think some of it stemmed from being the only one and being in a space where you just knew that you don't fit. It was almost like a self-fulfilling prophecy also, since I already had experiences within my department where I did not belong.

It got worse. I kept going back and forth. One thing that made me think about staying is because of the African American male colleague who came in with me. I felt like that was all strategic, I felt like they hired us there because of that. They knew that that would help with retention. So I would say that it took me about four or five months and throughout that four or five months, I had extreme moments of I'm out, I'm done, to I'm going to give it a little more time. Oh yeah and where am I going to go? I have to find a job. I didn't want to go back home, where I would have to live with my parents. By June or July, being at that job was taking a toll on me. I had to go, because there were certain instances that really did it for me, that really make me feel like it was about time to go. I learned what I needed to learn and I gained the experience I needed to experience at that time. I learned so much, but something gave me a sign that it was time to go. It took me about four months of contemplation before I left.

It was also a very flat area. This contributed to me feeling really caved in. The area was already something that I wasn't used to, so I did not like the fact that it was also so flat. The fact that it was the country and had farmlands, I didn't mind that at all. In fact that was something

that could have kept me; that was one thing that I liked. The fact that I could be in the country, because it allowed me to enjoy nature and to go out, be able to workout, and go out often to connect to nature. I felt like that was my outlet. So nature was my way, my outlet to gain that power to gain that strength and to be able to reflect.

The University of course had good benefits and there were counseling for professionals and staff on campus. I made an attempt to make use of that. There was a point where I was really frustrated; there was one day that I made an attempt to contact that department. I said that I would prefer to have an African American therapist I could meet with, and [the receptionist] said that they did [have a African American therapist] but that unfortunately he was booked. It would have taken five months just to meet with him, because his schedule was so busy. When they told me that, they asked me if it would be fine for me to see someone else. I was like no, no thanks. I felt like for my context, I needed to see someone who I felt like would understand me and so it was very disappointing to hear that. At that time I felt like I didn't want to make the appointment for five months in advance, I just said thank you but no thanks and hung up.

[I ended up talking to two people on campus.] One was an African American male who we both came in at the same time and both experienced similar experiences in the department. Another friend [I talked to] on campus was an African American woman who understood [my experiences] because she went through her own experiences. It was interesting how I was able to use instant messaging to vent my frustrations and to engage in conversation that can help me laugh it off or make light of the situation. If it was something I didn't like, what someone said to me, their tone, obviously I could not always go and speak to someone at the time, so I would be able to send them a message and engage in a conversation more instantly. So for me that helped to be able to talk to those two main people.

[When I became even more fed up] I don't think I felt guilty for taking a few days off. I really wasn't sick, I wasn't physically sick. I think mentally I just needed a break. I begin to not feel guilty about it. Now I understand what was happening, I would have headaches and had a hard time sleeping because of maybe some relational or dispute I had with one of my colleagues from the day before, or I didn't feel right about something. This issue was larger than the department and campus, it was also that I did not have family in the area and this place wasn't diverse. It was hard, there were only two people that I connected to and could relate to in the area. So it was very challenging.

I think with White women I really didn't feel the connection with them over there. For some reason with White women I felt like they were more likely to not really relate to me. I think there was this sense that because we were both women that we should be able to connect on that level, but it was almost as if sometimes I felt like it was catty. Some of my colleagues were very competitive, very sneaky. Like they would smile and communicate with me, but at the same time they were talking about me behind my back.

White males were more willing to listen. They listened more, in my experience and making it a point to ask me how I was doing in that space and what I needed. One of my White male colleagues that I really connected with, he worked there for a long time and he did not have a positive experience there. So he was able to understand my experiences and give me advice. So generally speaking there really wasn't a connection. I remember my supervisor, who's a White male he had told me at the interview that he grew up in a working class family and he was first generation, but at the same time I realized that even though he tried to make that connection, I knew for a fact that underneath all that, he had his White privilege.

Black men and women I think for the most part I had a lot of difficulty connecting with a lot of [Black] women on campus. I mentioned only having one or two people there that I connected with. I feel like in those spaces Black women tend to be religious and I wasn't that. I grew up in a religious home and I was trying to break away from that and go towards more of spiritual a spiritual route, more cultural awareness, so because of that I was able to connect to a lot of Black women professionally but beyond that it became difficult. It seemed like that was all they talked about, the church and religion, and that really wasn't part of me anymore, so it was challenging. Black men, I think that was more positive, besides this one Black male, who would be considered the Uncle Tom, he was at my interview. He was the person who was supposed to orient me to my new position and was trying to dictate how I would spend my time while at the University. He was very condescending and very inappropriate. He wanted to get to know me and for me to depend on him. I think he was my only problem over there, as it pertains to Black men.

I personally was pushed by my family to obtain higher education, to get a good job, to be able to support myself, and to help increase mobility for my whole family. They didn't say that but that is basically what we are encouraged to do. Now I am 28, now the requirements are to maybe have children and start a family. So we as Black women have to not only face issues in the workplace but we also have to keep in mind that we have to do it all. How will we be perceived in such spaces by our colleagues if we ever got pregnant? White women, they experience their own challenges, but imagine how I would be perceived and would it be professional to actually carry out my role or my womanhood in such spaces because I am already not seen as capable anyways. What types of support would I gain? So yes, that plays a role. My mother has been everything, she has worked, she has raised us.

Add to that your daily obligations if you have a family, like children and a husband. I am single and I think a lot of Black women who are in higher ed struggle in the area of relationships also. We are trying to find the space and the opportunity for a love relationship because there are hardly any of our men, who want us, around. That's also very complicated and a whole other story. We go through a lot and we have to constantly be submissive, happy, and smiley all the time at work. A lot of the times I am so happy and not miserable, but as Black women we have so many things we have to deal with and we may have to switch on and off. We have to become that chameleon to deal with everything. So when we are labeled as angry Black women, or labeled as someone who is being rude, disrespectful, or unpleasant because we have to take care of something so tied to us, like family which we value, deal with the institutional racism at work, then we have to also face the fact that we don't even have a partner to cuddle with, it gets rough. It's everything that comes together that makes it very challenging, every single day, but we are still strong and still doing what we have to do. It's multifaceted and we are expected to be something that we are not and still be consistently the person everyone is relaxed to be around, submissive, and smiley but there are times when we need to change and evolve to handle our business while still being respectful. Sometimes I feel like I'm treated unfairly or I see injustice. It's hard to stay smiling. Those are some of the many challenges we face as Black women.

The great thing about my experience at my previous institution is that I needed to have that experience so that I could see, what do I really want? When I came back from the location, I was just living in and came to the airport at home, I saw the diversity and heard the different languages we were talking and the cultures represented. I feel appreciated and a valued member of the community. This whole town, I feel like I fit. I felt the greatness and the realness, and the authenticity in that space. I felt at home. I felt like in this area I could be myself. Over here



people honored me, my family, people in the area, people I know. I felt like I was respected, I was honored, I deserved to be here. So that's how I would contrast it.

I think there are several things that could have been done [to stimulate change in higher education]. First, there needs to be a discussion on the politics of higher ed, the systems, how do we navigate hierarchies, understanding how there are over 4000 institutions of higher education in the United States and so, how do we understand the different challenges on different campuses? How do we understand the difference a region can make such as its weather, political leaning or diversity level? Do students truly know the different types of institutions, what types of challenges and issues are more prevalent in each, the voices of all of the student experience at each of those schools, what are the students saying about the institution, and how does this inform administration in terms of how we can do better to form solutions, not just address concerns, as professionals? I think that those are the conversations that need to be happening, because we don't really look at the inside of it, the truth, the underlying issues of the institution and how all are impacted. The students are often the most truthful and hearing from students who differ in race, class, and gender, will tell you a whole lot about the institution. I think that is important. I also think that in higher ed we have to take ethics or law courses, and I think that [these issues] needs to be discussed more [both in-and-out of the classroom]. Equal opportunity and diversity in higher education, not just talking about we need to recruit more diverse students, we need to recruit more diverse higher ed professionals, but how do professionals work with these groups and build an inclusive environment? There are a lot of questions that we need to ask when we consider our own identity and when we are an underrepresented student or administrator, even faculty, entering a homogeneous institution. I think there needs to be a course entitled, "the reality of student affairs." We come into the field with the idea that we are

going to impact students' lives and change the world, but often times much of the work we are doing is pushing paper, a lot of bureaucracy, depending on the institution, and as a professional I may not have a voice. How do I deal with that? How do I speak up and advocate not only for my students, but for myself? Higher ed is changing and it is now more about money and about assessment, how can we show the numbers, but we are not really talking about student experiences and we are not making sure that what we do is student-centered. This impacts the work of the higher ed professional who cares about students.

Our institutions are full of ideas, knowledge, growth, and initiating change so if we are that type of institution, there is no excuse for a [genuine] dialogue on integration and inclusivity to not be had. Also, how can the values and experiences of professionals not be exclusive to one particular group or culture? Now this is obviously a greater systemic issue, beyond higher ed, but I feel that higher ed has the power and has the resources to begin not only starting a dialogue but also initiating solutions and promoting true social justice. Also, providing a space where when you hire a person of color, you do not hire only one. If this is not the case, the staff should have undergone training on how to be an inclusive team and this staff [member] needs to be connected to other people on campus who are true supporters for him or her. In such spaces, they should go above and beyond to make sure that we are treated as professionals, not as pawns, not as little spectacles, not as foreign, or unable to be understood, not as incompetent. You know, we have to as quote, unquote minorities, learn your way of doing things. I have to learn their values, the way they view student development, how they operate and the layers of politics that are uncompromising where people are in their positions due to privilege. The institutional structure forces one to ask, who is really in power, who are the senior staff, and why are they all White males? What is going on in terms of the dynamics? Why are all the secretaries Black

women? Why are they treated the way they are? We are watching, people do not understand that, we as women of color, Black women we are watching. We understand, we feel, we know, we hear, we communicate, and so we recognize what is happening around us and to us. So when we see something happening to our own brothers or sisters, and know that the greater community looks out for their own, we have to look out for ours as well. So when we see something that happens to someone that looks like us, it is basically happening to us also. So keep that in mind, I think that higher ed should keep that in mind as they are moving forward.

### **Allison Jamie's Story: Shift of Loyalty from Them to Me**

My experiences as a Black woman in society have not been anything extreme. I haven't experience real blatant racism, but I have experienced things that are unique to me. I am proud of who I am. I am proud of who I have become and the influences that I have on others. I am proud of the community I live in. I don't look at it as a bad thing. I think my interactions in society are pretty general, and are pretty good in a way.

Being a young professional when I started the job, I never considered how your physical work environment can have an impact on your actual productivity, how you feel about coming to work every day, and your interactions with people and things like that. So for me my first experience with that was when our office actually had to move. When I first started I had my own office; it worked for me. I could have students come in and out, I could close my door when I needed quiet time, need to prepare for a personal conversation with students, and things like that. Then when we moved I lost that, that private space and sense that it is mine. I had to go down to a reduced space, a reduced cubed space. That really did take a toll on me. I did not want to come, there was no privacy, I do not like the space, it is cold in there, I cannot decorate it, I cannot personalize it, and I cannot have private conversations. It was just a shock to me,

because it was literally my work environment that was driving me crazy. With time I got used to it, then we moved again into a new working space. It was a little bit better, everything was newer, a little more privacy, and I was actually able to choose where I wanted to be. I could put up a few things to personalize the space so that kind of made it better, but it would never be that first office. It would have been nice to have an office, to close my door and get work done, meet with students, or have a conference call, and things like that but it was not my option.

I was finishing my masters and after I was finished with school I was going to take a break, there were a lot of leadership changes, and we had high stress times and low stress times just like in many student affairs offices where you have those peak times where you are recruiting, you are advertising, planning for the next year, trying to wrap up programs, you have a new person coming in and you have to adjust to their way of leading and what they want and what they expect. Then I decided to go back to school and going to school and working full-time, I would not say it was easy but it was okay. My director was flexible and allowed me to flex my time. I could work longer days or work on the weekend, so I was able to balance that. But once the writing part came it was really hard to balance work, life, and my health did a turn on me. It was an unexpected turn at 26. Then it did another turn on me again at 30. So by the time I turned 30 I had all types of stuff going on with my health, trying to do school, I'm trying to work, I am trying to maintain things. I'm in different organizations, and I was just doing the most. For me those personal health things impacted me. At first I did not let them bother me or I would, I guess like most Black women do, you know just work through it. You would just go to work in pain, go to work sick, you will deal with that, and just deal with that. But it was in my last two years in that position where my body just shut down. When I wanted to push it and go to work, my body was like no you cannot go to work. I think that was hard for the people I

worked with, especially my direct supervisor who have seen me throughout the years always come to work. It was like why all of a sudden can she not come to work now. I can't come to work for a week or I can't do that, or no I cannot stay late, or I can't do this, or I can't do that. My health really did become a priority for me. I had that support there, but I think I only had that support when I was doing what was necessary or what was expected of me. That was hard to deal with, it really was. And again being as loyal as I was, I felt guilty, guilty for being sick. Had I been met with the same openness, stability, concern, and understanding as I was when I first became sick verses when I became sicker, it would have made it harder for me to leave.

I actually went to the university that I worked for, so I was familiar with it. I knew the area. It was familiar for me. It was a culture shock actually attending the school, but after being on the campus for 4 years and learning the area and working there for 9 years it became very familiar. I am a creature of habit, going back to when we talked about my mom. Seeing my mom have to change jobs and things like that [really made me want to do things differently and be more stable]. I really based my whole life within this radius. For me the campus community was a place where I lived in. Everything was very close, I drove the same route, I had the same gym, and everything was convenient for me. My life revolved around that area. So it was easy to say, I know this, this is the route I take to get here, when I come on campus I know where I am parking, I know not to hit a student, I know what time I need to get here if I want a good parking spot.

When I first started the job, I was happy, this is perfect, I know the people, and I know the culture of the campus. But again my loyalty because when you are familiar with people and you know of people and those people have certain reputations there is an unspoken rule that what they say goes and that's it. You have to learn the hierarchy of higher education and especially

within student affairs; you have to learn to fall in line with that hierarchy. I think I was naïve in believing that if you work hard you will be rewarded and that people will see your work and your work will define you. I learned that it's not only about what you can do, but more about who you know, who knows you, what is the perception that you give off, and what people say about you when you are not around. So those are the things that end up mattering. You have to know who your friends are, know who your enemies are, know who you are an advocate for, and knowing those who were never going to stand up for you. They are the biggest determinates of if you are going to move up and if you are going to be invited here or serve here. So it is more of how you are perceived, more than what you really can do and what you know. It is very important and it was a lesson I did not have to learn until [after] the first couple of years there. The first few years was smooth and I was fine with doing new things, trying new things, meeting new people, being on different committees, getting to know people, people liking me and I like them. But we had a leadership change and the attitude and culture that she brought in was not what we were used to.

I can't say it's the field, I think it's the culture of each institution. I will tell anyone who is going in to higher education, especially an African American female, that you need to understand the culture of where you are going to work. You have to understand that because if you don't understand the culture, the hierarchy, and the unspoken rules and regulations of the space where you are then it can be very much detrimental to your success. For me, I thought I knew the culture, I thought I understood who were my allies, who were my advocates, and who were my enemies, but over time those lines were blurred. Also my loyalty to my job, to the students, to the center, and to department heads made it difficult for me to understand that I am no longer fitting in with the culture. The culture is no longer working for me. I did not have the

advocates that I thought I would have, again in my situation I was working for someone who was well loved. So it was hard to say, well I think it's time for me to move on, because everyone else will question, so what's wrong with you? For me, as I said before, when I originally came in the leadership and administration was different. She [as the vice president of student affairs] had a very strong work ethic. She knew what she wanted to see, what she didn't want to see, her vision was very clear, all of those things. She was supportive of what I did and she knew and understood where I was coming from and all those things. Then we transitioned to a different leadership where the culture she brought with her was very different. It was business oriented. It was very much based on return on investments, business mindset, what is the end result, how can we make it happen, and how is this? It was so rigid. It was hard to adjust and think and feel as if I was capable under these new expectations. So it became very difficult at times to adjust to what she was used to and what she brings. Operating under that was a very trying time in my career.

It was a very difficult time. I remember after one of my first meetings with the new leadership I actually texted my director, at that time, do he want my resignation letter immediately or did he want it at the end of the week. That's how bad the meeting was. So going through a change in leadership was difficult and having to switch the way we talked, the way we did things was difficult and everyone else around us was still doing it the same way. Because we were under new leadership it had to be done differently, so those things definitely contributed to me feeling like this cannot be like this everywhere. There is always leadership, there are always people you have to deal with, but this was different.

Our motto was your job is to make your supervisor look good, your direct supervisor to look good. Then their motto is to make their supervisor look good. In our unit our job was to

make our director look good, and his job was to make the VP look good. So we had to operate in making the best decision. So it wasn't always making the best decision for the department and it wasn't always about what you felt is best or what you felt is right. It was what is going to make sure you don't embarrass your boss, so he won't embarrass his VP. It was important to make sure that nothing negative was said about your boss. So every interaction was presentation. Every interaction was a show. Every interaction had to be about making sure you build a good relationship with others so that you if you had to go back to them they couldn't say anything bad about us. So it was always about the next person up. It was never about how I feel [or felt].

One day I had a bad day and I was short with someone [a White female on campus] and it reflected badly on my direct supervisor. He came back to me and says what that interaction meant and that it was not good. It was almost as if I was supposed to apologize for having a bad day or not stopping and showing this person the proper respect they felt that they deserved at that time. It's just very interesting to be verbally reprimanded for that. He said, hey you did not speak to that person and they were slighted. I wasn't having a good day, I had two or three things going on, I was trying to handle some things and I said hey and kept walking. I did not stop and have a conversation; I had things to take care of. I really had to be mindful especially after the change in leadership about the perception I feel like I was giving off. I did not want to be seen as the angry Black woman. I was constantly trying to ensure I wasn't trying to be that.

When you work for someone that everyone enjoys being around, the golden star, it is hard when you are having any issues within that unit to go to someone else and be like hey I am having this issue what should I do? They are like oh no this person is wonderful to work for, how can you be having these kinds of issues, what do you mean? So I really had to pick and choose who I talked to and I really had to identify who was there for me. So again, I think my



challenges for being in that space, was that I was very loyal and very naïve to what it means to be a professional and to grow professionally, and to understand what networking means, and to understand what that career ladder looks like, how to plan out those things. I was naïve to that, but I loved going to work and I loved doing what I was doing. I enjoyed the students, oh I might not like this but I really enjoy doing this part. Or I am having trouble here but I really enjoy this part. And then when I became really unhappy about the whole working environment, I didn't want to leave when I was upset. Everyone always says you can't leave while you are upset or bitter; you have to leave on a good note. But then I had to get back to a good place.

So I was on that campus for 14 years basically. Even when I went away, I was still working for an entity of the university. So again the first two years were good. I loved the VP, my director, I was on committees, I was doing outreach, I was doing all of these things that I loved to do, I was doing what I thought I was supposed to be doing, specifically working with first generation and underrepresented minority students, doing programming, meeting new people, learning new things, enjoying my office. That [all] was great then there was a change in leadership and at that time, back in 2008.

So back in 2009 I was ready to go. I did get some call backs, some interviews but never a second or third interview. I think I really started complaining about it back in 2009. I gained weight and got sick. Then again after finishing coursework I started to look again, because I was like hey I am done with coursework and I can write [my dissertation] from anywhere. That was probably 2011, but again nothing came through. Then in 2013 and 2014, I really decided to really look.

During the spring of 2014, I defended my proposal and that is when my director in my performance appraisal sit me down and was like this is not your career university, I only want the best for you, I think you should start looking at other schools, start networking with other people, start figuring out what you want to do next, because I do not think this is the place for you and I do not think the opportunity is here for you, but I think you will be able to do great things and you need to start doing this, this, and this. It was basically like an exit interview, in a nice way. So it was a nice way of saying that what is best for the center is that you start looking for other places. It was given in the context of, hey I'm looking out for you, but I think it's time for you to move on. It was very interesting. It was indicated that this was not my career institution and where I would retire from, at least not right now. It was time for me to get out of my position, move on, and grow. I took that as I really need to start looking for another job. You know the people who are at their career institution, they have been on campus for years, they have every t-shirt, their face is everywhere, everyone knows them but maybe for me maybe it wasn't going to be the institution I was going to be at forever.

I defended my dissertation in July 2014, and he [my former supervisor] actually sent me a job to apply for and I actually got another job with the same organization. That's the short version.

I felt like it was intended for me to leave. I didn't feel guilty, because of the things that happened after I left. Everyone knew that I was leaving except for me. So it was more of a bitterness than an uneasiness. I wasn't replaced immediately. The way that this was set up was that there was a director, an assistant director, two coordinators and an administrative assistant. Within a week of me leaving the other coordinator was promoted to an assistant director. I had been there longer than him; I had more education than him.

I have learned from my career there [that it is important for me to understand] what I need from the leadership, whether it be from my immediate boss or top administration. I need to know the vision, the goal, I need to know what we are doing and where we are going, what role do you want me to play? When I know all of those components I can operate successfully. Even for administration, when I know where we are going and what we are doing, and how we are going to get there, I can fill in the details. My mother is a very loyal person. She will stick through the most awful work environments. She loves to prove that she can work hard. For me I had a loyalty to the person I worked for. I had to realize that I cannot live my life being loyal, this building, this office, and these people were not going to be as loyal to me.

I remember one event that we did. We had an affinity group dinner and we had a special guest come in. It was great to just have 30 or 40 African American women being at the table and having lunch together. To me it was one of the most powerful events that we have had there, and we have only had it one time during the 9 years I was there. But it was moving in how we don't get together. We don't confide in each other, we kind of just operate in our own siloes. We kind of have to identify who are my allies, can I trust this person, and can I not trust this person? On that particular day and at that particular event it was moving, partly because it was nothing that I have ever experienced before. To be at that event and to look back at that event now, it was a very powerful event to sit around the table with, pretty much, the highest ranked African American woman to the lowest ranked African American woman on campus. It was a wonderful event. I think the challenges would be to be able to feel free to be in community with each other.

So the relationships we [as African American women] form become greater than actually moving up, than the actual pursuit of something different, something new, or something unknown. Because we are relationally connected and relationally committed to the unit or

department, or the people that we work with or work for. That is something that I for lack of a better word, fell victim to or experienced. Relationally, with that loyalty that was there, I considered my coworkers my friends. We celebrated birthdays, we celebrated holidays together, we brought each other gifts, we looked out for each other, we picked each other up from the airport, we road trip with each other, we went to conferences together. So it wasn't just a co-worker to co-worker relationship. We were friends. We knew things about each other, we laughed about family together, so to have to break that bond with my family, or people I considered my family or some of them closer than my family, that is a hard thing to do and I don't know if that was just for me or if that is seen across the board, or if that is particular to African American women in higher ed.

I know women who have worked together and one has retired and they would come back and work part-time in another department just so they can hang out with such and such that they have known for the last 20 years. So relationally it's very interesting to see how we interact with each other, why we stay, and why we position ourselves in that way. I remember a lady who was able to build her whole staff and I noticed, oh she is pulling in that African American woman, oh wait a minute she is pulling in another African American woman, oh she is going to pull in another African American woman. It was very interesting to see her bring all those people in and make it work. She knew who she wanted, she knew who she wanted to work with, she knew how to make it work, and what she could get out of the people that she knew. So I think that does play a part in that position that we are in. Then I see some women who feel like this is where I want to be and I don't care who is in the way. Like I said my unit was very diverse and ethnic. We had three Black people, one Hispanic, and one White lady, and all the students who came in were predominantly Black or Hispanic. So we knew that it was a luxury to have that

type of makeup, because you could go to the counseling center and you have one Black person, or you could go to Athletics where you have one Black person working there, or you could go to the cafeteria and you see all the Black people.

So it is who you are tied to and who you are close to. I had close colleagues who worked in a department that lacked diversity. I know one who worked in admissions, he was the only African American, and he got looked over for a promotion on at least three occasions in the time that he was there. He realized that he did not have any obligations [which restricted him from leaving, so he left]. He was cool with us, he could come kick it in our office, and come and hang out. Whenever we did stuff he was always there, but when it came to his actual work environment he was not comfortable, he was not happy, he did not have the support. I again know that our space was definitely unique to a campus where if you are a counselor you would be the only African American one on campus. If you work in athletics you were probably the only one or one of two. It's a very interesting experience when you are the only one, seeing it from their point of view; I know I couldn't have done that. I know I wouldn't have lasted 9 years if I had to be in an environment like that [where I was the only one]. You have to make certain sacrifices and I have seen people leave. They said that they were pursuing a better opportunity. [I knew that I was] working for a different type of people [in my diverse office], I know that if I have input people will actually listen and hear me. So again I know that I was lucky, not lucky but being able to know that even though I had all this stuff going on upper administration wise, I knew I still had input where I was [with my colleagues in my immediate office]. I knew that my views and opinions were still valued and that what I brought to the table would still work. So I didn't feel defeated in that way, I can say that.

Always for our going away parties for our Black staff, it was like aww man you leaving? Well let me get your number, let me do this, let me do that. It's like you don't want to break that connection, because you have worked so hard to form it, to form that bond, but at the same time you know that it was time for them to move on.

I always felt like I should put the students first. They were always on the forefront of my mind. I hate to leave my students, they need me and I hate to leave them. But I had to realize that they leave me every 4 years, roughly. They leave, so it's always going to be that constant change. The ones I was close to, I let them know that I was looking, and when I was getting ready to leave. I gave them a way to contact me. I said here's my email address and phone number if you ever need me I am right down the street. So I tried to keep a connection that way.

So once you make that commitment and that bond it does hurt when you have to leave. It does hurt to see things kind of change and you are no longer in the loop. You be like, so what's going on? And I can't ask, because it's not my business anyway. So I just went back to the campus for the first time since August. So yes it was back in January, when I went back on the campus. It was tension, then it was like [this conflicting feeling of] is it me, am I just anxious about it, or it is other people? It ended up being fine.

### **My Story: The Door of No Return**

I sat at that table in awe after Gina and Allison Jamie told their stories. When Gina was talking, I could not dispute the fact of the similarities of our experiences. Like her, I went into Academic Advising, which seems to be overwhelmingly filled with White woman. We were minorities not only in the predominantly White institutions we occupied, but we were also in a

position that many Black women, did not enter when embarking upon a career in higher education.

When hearing Gina's words I could not help but to think back to a quote describing the connection between hairstyles and racial identity. Rooks (2001) states "There have long been consequences within and outside of African American communities, for wearing one's race wrong, and that hairstyles are often the means others use to determine whether we are wearing a right, or wrong, racial identity" (p. 280). The way in which Black women wear their hair can be seen as not only a style but to some it can be viewed as a political statement. There seems to be this fear, or maybe some jealousy that surrounds natural un-straightened hair. Is it feared because it is seen as being a rebel? Is it feared because it challenges and redefines European standards of beauty? Is there jealousy because our genes can produce hair like that? Is there jealousy because of the confidence it alludes? As a Black women, who also had circumstances in which my afro became the source of stereotyping and othering me in the workplace, I could definitely relate to Gina. The first and only time my coworkers saw me after straightening my natural hair I received overwhelming approval and compliments, especially from my White coworkers. "Real good hair is straight hair, hair like White folk's hair. Yet no one says so. No one says your hair is so beautiful, so nice because it is like White folk's hair. We pretend that the standards we measure our beauty by are our own invention" (hooks, 1996a, p. 91). Hair politics and the belief that Black women's beauty is measured by White standards is an unspoken rule that follows many Black women to the workplace.

While Gina was talking about the challenges she faced as a woman with locs, I thought about my own experiences with having natural hair. I remembered my own experience of being

humiliated and surveilled when I had to get measured for convocation regalia. Apparently I was the first "woolly haired" Black woman who was measured in this Department.

I guess this incident was partly my fault, but it is clear that convocation regalia do not seem to be made for those with afros. I had put off getting measured because I didn't know how I wanted my hair under the regalia cap. What were my options? I guess I was supposed to straighten it. Oh well, not only did I not want to straighten my hair; I did not have time that week with work and school. I was too busy. After meeting with a student I checked my email and noticed that the woman who was ordering regalia had emailed me. She had indicated that I was the only person in my office who had not been measured. Oh great, I was the only Black women, and the last to get measured. I guess I was holding up the late stereotype. Oh well, she will just have to measure me with my fro. I thought to myself this should only take a few minutes. I saw my White female coworker go to get measured and returned in two minutes or less. This should take no time.

I walked up the hall and approached her desk. I apologized for being the person who was apparently holding up the regalia order. She said no worries there were a few faculty members who have not been measured. She asked me for my height and weight. I guess that secret is out. I guess I needed to disclose that to make sure my gown fit me properly when I lead one line of graduates to their commencement ceremony.

Now on to measuring my crown; I had no idea that what was about to happen to me was going to happen. If I had known, I would have never walked my Black-self down there. I may have actually opted out of participating in the commencement ceremony. She looked up at my hair. She pulled out the measuring tape and then looked at my hair again. She then proceeded to



say let's walk down the hall. She wanted me to go to the office of the White woman who had her job before she was promoted. I tried to be compliant and just went with the flow. I followed her down the hall. My hair like intuitive antennas knew it was going to be some stuff about to go down. I still had time to just escape, and retreat back to my office. But I kept walking. We entered the other White woman's office. This is when the woman, I walked down the hall with, told her coworker that she needed help figuring out how to do the measurements for my head. She had this look of confusion on her face, as if I was some foreign object. All I did was stand there, because I could not believe this was happening to me. I mean I understand I am the only Black woman that she had to measure and I so happen to have a fro, but really? Is this how I needed to be treated? Was this my punishment for being late to get measured? The woman still in her seat just looked up at my hair. There were a few moments of silence. It was so awkward. The silence was broken with three simple words that dug in under my skin. Does it move? This lady cannot be serious. It took all the kinks in my hair to not let her and the women who paraded me down the hall have it. I tried to remain cool, but I answered her with piercing eyes and a slight attitude. I said of course it moves. She said well can you make it as flat as you can and push it back. I did. She then instructed the woman, who brought me down there, how to measure. Wow, I can't believe this is happening to me. I felt so disrespected, not only as a Black woman, but as a person. I was not on the auction block and I wasn't undergoing one of those anthropological or biological studies that tried to justify the inferiority of the negroid race. I could not believe what I just endured and the psychological impact it had on me. After she finished measuring my head, while I held my hair down, I walked towards the door to leave. I was done with being humiliated, alienated, and just plain ole disrespected. As I approached the door to leave, I thought the woman who walked down the hall with me was going to walk back

up the hall. She did not. Instead it is my speculation, based on the facial expressions that I saw and the intuition picked up from my hair which was back to standing tall, that they took a moment to laugh and talk about me. I was now going to be the brunt of an office joke. I bet this year they won't have to deal with this because the woman who replaced me is White.

After that ordeal, I had to walk outside. I too used nature as my refuge. On days when I felt like my skin, was not appreciated in my office, I escaped and went out to the source which helped to sustain and darken it, the sun. A brief walk in the sun did wonders for me. It was a nourisher, energizer, and comforter. Connecting to the earth and nature was something that kept me physically and symbolically grounded. I would leave my job and take a few minutes away to sit under a tree. Gina and I were not the only two Black women who sought nature as a refuge. I thought back to a time when I read about a Black women who discussed how going outside was a coping mechanism from work stressors. "I like to get out and walk and have some quiet time by myself, and kind of reflect on myself. I think probably the best coping strategy for me is finding a quiet place and just reflect on what I need to do to pull myself out of the situation" (Hall, Everett, Hamilton-Mason, 2012, p. 219). I had to get away, who or what else other than nature was there for me in my immediate space?

During the times when I could not go out, because of extreme weather or because I only had a few moments before my next student was scheduled to come in, I found other ways to cope. When going outside was not the most feasible option, I would often retreat back to my office, close my door, and put on some music that was uplifting and appreciates who I am as a Black woman. Songs like Solid as a Rock by Sizzla, Brown Skin by Richie Spice, Give Myself Away by Sizzla are songs that helped me as I faced my oppressive workspace. This music was used as a coping mechanism and empowered me to have the strength to continue to fight

adverse circumstances. Listening to this and knowing that my ancestors, whose blood flows through my veins, endured and overcame more oppressive circumstances kept me walking proudly, strongly, confidently, warrioressly.

When Gina discussed her realization of not seeing any inclusive art, with the exceptions of a few flyers that suggested inclusiveness, I immediately thought about my own experience, almost every flyer that was in my former office was either procedural and bland or it supported and promoted White ideologies or supremacy. I remember, at one point I decided that I owed it to my ancestors to not continue to put up flyers or email certain flyers. The only Black flyers as it pertained to my Department were about slavery, post-colonization, and other demoralizing areas of our history. I became so frustrated, and made it a point to not put flyers in my office which celebrated and glamorized the happy moments of White history, while focusing on Black despair. If my students had a question about course offerings or wanted to have a better understanding of a course, I was able to answer their inquiries, but when they entered my office it was my space. It was the only space amongst Whiteness where I showed them who I was, and how I venerated my people.

Gina's story made me confront and reflect on my own experiences at my former PWI. Allison Jamie's story served as a trigger to instantly remembering a very challenging time at the institution I voluntarily terminated my employment from. When she mentioned needing and wanting a door after experiencing an office change, I could not help but think back to my own experience with a door.

Oh you needed a door? Well let me tell you about the day I shut my office door a little too aggressively. I had a meeting on campus, with a Black woman, because of the

discriminatory circumstances in my office. The meeting ran a little longer than anticipated because not only was there a lot to unpack but I became emotional while discussing what I observed and how I was being treated. From the start of this ordeal I was so strong, but that day the tears were falling.

I dried my eyes and put myself back together. I walked back to my office. I stopped at the receptionist desk to inquire about my student. The receptionist mentioned that my supervisor had met with the student. At the time I was just grateful that someone was able to see the student. There were plenty of times that I have met with students for my colleagues, so I did not think it would be a big deal. Oh I forgot, those were my White colleagues and I'm a Black woman so everything I do is a big deal and will be exacerbated. I walked in my office and checked my email. Oh great a message from my supervisor.

I was furious, not only did he know where I was and why I was there because I put my appointment on my calendar; I have met with his and his supervisor's students on previous occasions, when they had meetings or other engagements which extended longer than anticipated. The part that hurt me the most was just how hostile it was and how it challenged me as a professional. I know students love working with me, not only do I have the evaluations, thank you emails from students and parents, I also have had the office support staff tell me how there are many White and students of color who only want to come in to meet with me. I know that I go above and beyond for my students even those who are also discriminated against and have filed formal complaints with the institution about the same space I am having a challenging experience with.

I could not believe he said that, no sense of understanding or even inquisition. I would have felt better if he asked me questions rather than attacked me with the email he copied his

supervisor and human resources on. I printed the email so I can add it to the thick stack of other emails I was saving to document this experience and can have if "they" wipe out all of my email one day. I walked right past his office with my head held high and fro to the sky. I knew he was in there, but I did not want to see him. I reached the printer and I could not believe that he wrote this. Having this printed out and not just on my computer screen really evoked the realness of this.

I walked past his office and this time I looked in. I looked right at him. He just looked up at me and didn't say anything. I figured that would be the case. He had a lot to say in emails but nothing to my face. He was more of a typing "gangsta" and not one to come directly to me. I guess he needed to be able to hide behind the computer and sought comfort in the amount of people he copied on emails he sent to me.

I walked past. I have had it with this situation. I did not care if he copied the president of the institution or whomever to be on Black woman patrol. He had his army of people who were known and powerful on campus. I had my warrior ancestors whose DNA was running through my veins and was responsible for my hue, facial features, and hair. I reached my office and closed my door loudly and with no mercy. The noise radiated throughout the space and a slight pandemonium swept through the office. After meeting in the hallway my colleagues realized that I was the one responsible for the noise and in fact it was not a gun shot or something that fell and crushed anyone in the office. During the whole ordeal my supervisor never came to defuse the situation or check to see if his fellow employees were safe from the "crazy Black woman" who is apparently fed up. I told the receptionist that I was going home. I was done. Yes, I slammed the door and I did it unapologetically.

I get home and received a phone call from my supervisor's supervisor. He called while he was at a meeting in another city. He indicated that my supervisor talked to their connection in human resources, a woman I refer to as the Daughter of the Confederate, and she suggested that my supervisor call the police. Of course she did. No one hurt, not even a broken nail, no threat, not only have I left the premises, voluntarily, but I did not say or act in a way that indicted that I wanted to escalate this further than slamming my door. I was surprised. Not only have I ever had the police called on me for my actions, but no one could have told me that my first time would have been at my place of employment. He indicated that I would not be able to go back to work until I meet with him, my supervisor, and the Daughter of the Confederate. Great my Black-self had to go to meet with two White men and one White woman before I could step foot back in the office and continue to serve my students. He asked me when would be a good time for us to meet on Monday. I said in the most sarcastic voice I could push out, well since I was planning to be at work on Monday, I guess I'm available all day. What time works for you all?

He gave me a time and we proceeded to end the call. I could not believe this was my day. Yes Alison Jamie, I know you wanted a door so you can have some privacy, but for me the door and me slamming it made it very clear that it was time for me to leave. I had done a quiet protest a few weeks earlier where I cleared out my entire office. I left nothing there. I felt like they wanted Whiteness to prevail in that space and my colored self and colored space were not welcomed. I removed my diplomas because at the end of the day, in this space, I was still a Black woman and my suggestions and areas of expertise were overlooked or held with a grain of salt. I removed all of the Blackness from my office, Afrocentric art and proverbs and all other components of empowerment from my office. I decided to let them have Whiteness prevail, from the walls, to the policies, to the practices. No one knew what was happening, is she

leaving? Apparently silence did not change anything besides create rumors. I wanted them to hear me loud and clear. The door allowed me to do that. The door became my voice.

I knew that I wanted someone to be there with me during the meeting. I didn't want to be at this meeting alone. I am sure the assumption was that I was going to bring some dashiki wearing, afro rocking, Black Power fist pumping person with me; however a former colleague, a White woman, who knew my story and also endured sexism in this same space offered to come to the meeting with me. I was so relieved that she offered to go with me. She is an honest woman who was still tied to the institution because her husband is a professor there. Although she was not able to talk during the meeting she was someone who could take notes and be there to ensure words were not misconstrued.

I walked into the meeting with confidence. My feelings as I walked into the meeting were grounded in the belief that "sometimes people try to destroy you precisely because they recognize your power—not because they don't see it, but because they see it and they don't want it to exist" (hooks, 1996b, p. 149). I figured that if the consequence of me having my dramatic moment and not bowing down was that I was fired so be it. I was twenty-five years old and knew I could have "bounced back" and achieve success after this position. I went in there with nothing to lose.

I left the meeting not losing, especially not my dignity. I may have received two written letters of complaint and suggestions for correction. If it wasn't for me wanting to keep these letters for my record I would have burned them. The letters meant nothing to me. I was not intimidated by the professional letter head or the serious tone. I was not going to allow these letters to "break me in", I was not going to start kissing up to people who spent so much energy targeting me and trying to make things harder for me. This meeting and the letters I received

there were not going to make me change who I was. However, it made me realize even more so that the only thing I had to change was my place of employment.

### **There's Room at the Table for All Three of Us**

I glanced at the clock it was now 1:11pm. Although listening to the conversation did not allow me to write much that day, it was very productive. I definitely gained more perceptions of others experiences and the factors that contributed and ultimately led to voluntary termination at predominantly White institutions. I also had a significant amount of time to reflect on my own experiences and have a better understanding of how I conceptualized and made meaning of how I was impacted by my experiences.

After the women finished sharing their stories, I got up and walked over and sat at the table.

I said, "Hello my name is Jovaughn Barnard and I am the one conducting this study. As you all talked about your experiences I sat at the table beside you listening, reflecting, and writing about my own feelings and experiences. Thank you all once again for agreeing to participate in this study. Your voice will be shared in my dissertation."

The women seemed to be surprised by my abruptness and boldness of bombarding their space, right after they shared their personal stories. That moment of surprise quickly subsided as we took some time to talk about the study and the importance of the stories they shared.

There's room at this table. I am glad these women participated and shared their stories. All three of us departed the table with a better understanding of ourselves, each other, our experiences as Black women in America, and the experiences of Black women at predominantly White institutions.

As I walked back to the table to gather my belongings, I could not help but to think about bell hooks (2005) as she discusses the benefits of engagements in dialogues like this. "It is



important that black people talk to one another, that we talk with friends and allies, for the telling of our stories enables us to name our pain, our suffering, and to seek healing” (p. 13). As I watched the two women leave in different directions I could see the lightness in their walk. It is not that I believed that these women needed to participate in this study as a way to be healed from their experiences, but being able to share their stories provided them with relief. It was reflected in their walk. They walked in a way that showed that they no longer had to carry these stories around, like heavy bricks; instead they left those cautionary bricks at the table for others to learn and potentially heal from.

## **Chapter 5: Analysis**

The stories shared in the previous chapter would not have been shared in an exit interview. These stories would have left the academy with the women. To better understand the magnitude and power embedded in the stories the participants shared, I decided to provide an in-depth analysis of the stories. The analysis is presented in the form of themes to give the reader a better understanding of what these women's experiences were.

### **First Generation**

The theme of first generation is important to highlight. Both participants were the first in their family to attend college. Their collegiate experiences as first generation in many ways inspired them to pursue a career in student affairs. Both Gina and Allison Jamie discussed wanting to give back and work with first generation college students. They both wanted to make sure that they can assist in helping the next generation of students, especially those who look like them, matriculate through college.

The challenges of those who are first in their family to attend college can vary. However, there are many experiences which are similar, in that there is a lot of pressure of succeeding for the first in the family to go to college. These expectations and responsibility for elevating the family through educational pursuits and the difference you plan to make upon graduation, are often the burden placed on first generation college students. For Gina, Allison Jamie, and myself as first generation graduates, we felt compelled to reach back to others. We, as I mentioned before, wanted to help students build the knowledge, strength, and courage to make the difference they envisioned or aid in their process of discovering and unearthing their potential and actualizing their dreams. This desire of wanting to give back and feeling led to help others

achieve their goals is what led us to student affairs; our understanding of the challenges Black students face at PWIs is what brought us to our former institutions in which we endured gendered racism.

### **The Academy's Celebration of Qualities Associated with the Mammy**

Dating back to slavery, Black women were characterized, in oppositional dichotomies, as Mammies and Jezebels. One of the images “applied to African-American women is that of the mammy—the faithful, obedient domestic servant” (Collins, 2000, p. 72). Although this image was created during slavery, it was continuously perpetuated after slavery when many Black women had limited access to other careers and resorted to domestic work as a means to obtain money. Referring to Black women as the *maids of academe*, is describing their roles as being the nurturers and metaphorical cleaners on campus. Black women in student affairs are often expected to be representations of the mammy stereotype.

To further its productivity and exert of control over Black women the academy would prefer to have the Black women who are representations of the Mammy-type or can be groomed to become a Mammy. Those who fit the Jezebel stereotype can stick to the entertainment industry, in a culture that uses sex and sexualized bodies to sell goods and trends. The Mammy is not only celebrated in the academy but the qualities associated with her are in some ways an expectation.

The mammy image represents the normative yardstick used to evaluate all Black women's behavior. By loving, nurturing, and caring for her white children and ‘family’ better than her own, the mammy symbolizes the dominant group's perceptions of the ideal Black female relationship to elite white male power (Collins, 2000, p. 72).

Black women are expected to care for the students on campus. They may have entered student affairs, wanting to really put their energy into helping those who look like them but often times

at PWIs you are providing that nurture to a predominantly White population. The Mammies of the past were also subject to be caregivers and providers for White children. They had to raise the same children who may grow up and inherit their ownership. These Black women had to attend to the needs of the White families and often times had to neglect their own. Black women employed at PWIs, with the exception of those like Allison Jamie who worked in multicultural student affairs, often neglect the students in their own community to meet the needs of White students. They are there to serve and nurture those who are in the majority, rather they are liked or respected by these students or their parents or not.

The Mammy stereotype also comes with this unspoken expectation that you are to put other's needs first including your own mental and physical health. The academy seems to want and is more susceptible of accepting the Black women who are willing to make those sacrifices. Not to equate the participants as replicas of the Mammy persona but it is important to see how this played out in both of their stories.

Gina discussed how she was often penalized for spending too much time with students. In this case it was not that her workplace did not celebrate the nurturing side characterized through the Mammy, it was that Gina's office wanted her to downplay that quality for the sake of increasing productivity and to instead enhance the other qualities associated with the Mammy. Gina's colleagues wanted her to be obedient, to continue to smile, be pleasant and to follow rules associated with the office's culture. Her supervisor seemed to operate under the notion that a Black woman, especially one who embodies the Mammy persona, "still knows her 'place' as obedient servant. She has accepted her subordination" (Collins, 2000, p. 72). In Gina's case spending extra time assisting students was not seen as the most productive for her office. During walk-in advising she described the time as having a significant amount of

students. The office's expectations were to get students in and out as soon as possible. Quantity over quality seemed to be valued. Of course the students appreciated the nurturing assistance Gina provided; however her department during high traffic times viewed it as contributing to her lack of productivity. In some ways her nurturing was perceived as lazy because the number of students she served that week was lower when compared to her colleagues. Besides going against her own professional ethics and internal judgement, Gina decided to continue to work with student in the way she deemed sufficient. Her actions to do so went against the “do as you are told”, happy to please persona the Mammy is characterized as. If she would have listened and did as she was told, by providing her nurturing in the allotted time her office deemed fit she could have fit into the *faithful* and *obedient* Black women the Department would have been quicker to celebrate.

Allison Jamie discussed an instance in which a White woman on campus believed that she did not give her the respect she deserved. The woman as a form of retaliation decided to go to Allison Jamie's supervisor to allow him to be privy to the encounter. In this case Allison Jamie was a victim of being “penalized...[because she did] not appear warm and nurturing” (Collins, 2000, p. 73). That day her pleasant persona was not visible and therefore needed to be addressed and sanctioned. This brings to question this White woman's views on how Black women should be represented and what should be done if Black women deviate from being happy, nurturing, caring, and willing to please White society.

Allison Jamie also discussed how her office became less supportive of her when she became sicker and subsequently had to take time away from work. Although Allison Jamie worked in an office which was diverse and predominantly served Black and Brown students, she was not supported when her health kept her away from work. Being away from work did not

allow Allison Jamie to continue to put other's needs before her own. As her health worsened she was unable to continue to go to work sick, like she used to do. Her office appears to have been operating under the notion that as long as she can be obedient and willing to put others before her own needs, we can be there on the few occasions when she needs to be off. But once those occasions became more frequent and with longer durations they turned to a line of thinking more consistent with the notion of: *How dare she be sick? This office has a service to provide, and a role to provide at this PWI. Is Allison Jamie still productive to us? Is her being away from the office because of her illness a liability?* The culture of Allison Jamie's office staff through their choice to be less supportive and concerned during a time she needed them to be, is also a representation of how what the Mammy represents is valued in the academy. The Mammy was self-sacrificing and worked through her pain and illness because she was dependent on by those she served. Allison Jamie's office was not prepared for the sudden change and lack of dependability because of her illness. It is evident that the office was not prepared for a Black woman who had to put her own needs first in order to improve her health.

### **Companionship**

Elements of companionship were discussed in both Gina and Allison Jamie's stories. Companionship can be in the form of feeling supported, having a deeply beneficial social circle, to having a healthy relationship with an intimate partner. Each participant, based on their stories, can be considered to have or lack the adequate amount of companionship at their former institution or in the surrounding area in which they lived.

In Gina's case, she moved hundreds of miles away to a place she only knew about based on the warmth she felt in the summer research program she engaged in with other researchers of

color. She moved away from her family, culture and the comfort and familiarity she received in her east coast community, to a place that was flat, barren, and cold, actually and metaphorically. She began living in an area and working on campus where she did not know anyone with enough familiarity to label as a companion.

Gina discusses how she was perceived positively at the interview and what her actual experience was at work. She thought her coworkers and supervisor were going to be more accepting of who she was and what she was bringing to the department. The office and university appeared to be liberal and accepting as it pertains to diversity, however Gina felt that that was an illusion and not actualized in their policies and practices.

Gina's hair, spirituality, diet, fashion, culture, and upbringing made her a different type of Black woman than her coworkers were accustomed to. Gina was Black but apparently not the type of Black her colleagues were used to. Her colleagues thought she was one way and seemed to accept that. However, once they figured out she was more complex and in many ways did not fit their perspective or expectations of the type of Black woman they deemed tolerable, Gina was no longer accepted. Her being a vegetarian and spiritual, and not a churchgoer, and an alumna of a historically Black university was not accepted by them or deemed positive. Because of the lack of acceptance and companionship with her colleagues, Gina not only felt as if she did not belong there; she also felt in many ways alone.

In addition to not feeling accepted by her White colleagues, she also was unable to connect with her Black colleagues outside of a professional relationship, with the exception of one Black man who was hired with her and one Black woman with whom she shared similarities. Who Gina is, does not fit the image or stereotype of the Black women that lived in that area, and

her colleagues were more inclined to accept. This added to Gina feeling a lack of companionship. Although Gina was able to confide in her two Black colleagues, the connection and bond of having a significant other was something that Gina felt she was missing. It was challenging for Gina to come from a space of love and acceptance to a place where she has to “deal with the institutional racism at work, then...face the fact that we don’t even have a partner to cuddle with, it gets rough.” In Gina’s own words, it is apparent that the lack of companionship really affected her. Without family or a significant other Gina endured the issues of her workplace and went home without having the love, comfort, and support of her family or a partner. This further contributed to her feeling alone and because she did not establish that type of relationship in the area it made easier for her to leave. It can be inferred that if Gina had an adequate level of companionship at the institution and in the surrounding town she would have potentially been able to stay longer.

While discussing companionship, it is also necessary to touch upon a phenomenon Gina highlights in her narrative. She mentioned enduring her challenges at her former institution and not having a partner to cuddle with. It is important to further unpack and dissect a phenomenon that Gina and other Black women face in the academy. Although there are many debates surrounding Black women and their dating and marriage trends, I wanted to discuss a more specific component Gina is insinuating with her comment. I want to discuss how the communities, in which some PWIs are located, do not provide the dating needs some Black women are accustomed to prior to coming to the area or want to have the opportunity to engage in during that phase of their life. It brings up a question which can be continued to be discussed and pondered. What are the unique challenges Black women in some of the towns in which PWIs are located? Based on my own observations and anecdotal stories shared with me by



Black women who prefer to date Black men, it appears that in some cases there are not enough eligible Black men in the area in which the PWI is located. Eligible can be subjective and a Black man could be considered ineligible for many reasons including his sexual orientation, his own heterosexual dating preferences, which could exclude Black women, as well as other reasons which can be deemed reasonable or superficial. It is not only about an area having Black men, or other criteria to fit Black women's dating preferences, because there can be many factors which can contribute to lack of compatibility and lack of reciprocal interest between Black women and Black men. One component, I do not think is understood or is often overlooked as it pertains to Black women dating in predominantly White spaces is understanding what the space represents for all parties involved. PWIs are not seen as the final destination for many people, especially those who have lived in diverse spaces prior to moving to the area. This inherent lack of stability, due to many people coming to these spaces to advance professionally and academically but not always having the intentions on staying in that space, can contribute to lack of deeply formed bonds and companionship. On a college campus where people are only planning to be there for enough time to advance professionally, to build experience to go to *their career institution*, or for the duration of their educational program, the need to have a support system while there is important, but it may not be something which will keep them in that space beyond their time of advancement. This understanding that one is at an institution for a specific duration or until their professional or educational status reach a certain stage can significantly contribute to some only seeing that space, and potentially their intimate relationships or encounters, as temporary. Those in the academy can further unpack this phenomenon to get a better understanding of just how much a lack of intimate companionship affects single Black women in predominantly White spaces.

Allison Jamie's experience with companionship is on the other end of the spectrum, when compared to Gina. She moved from Mississippi with her family to the state in which the institution she ultimately left is located. By having her family in the state she was residing, being in the same region she grew up in, working at the institution she attended for her educational studies provided Allison Jamie with more familiarity and support. While Allison Jamie was enduring her workplace challenges and health issues she had her husband, family, and the support of her church and the social organizations she was a part of. All of these people were there to provide Allison Jamie with companionship. It can be inferred that Allison Jamie would not have stayed in her position for nine years without the support she received from her companions.

### **Contemplation**

Contemplation has been mentioned throughout this study. After the participants discussed their experiences leading up to their ultimate voluntary termination and departure from their former institution, I thought it would be worth further dissecting the feelings and thoughts associated with contemplation. It is important to understand that contemplation is a complex notion that is fluid. The actions taken after contemplation do not always appear to others as the most professionally and personally beneficial for the contemplator. It is also important to understand that contemplation is unique; it looks and is conceptualized differently for each person, during that time, and in those particular circumstances.

Gina discussed having doubts about her position soon after starting. She contemplated leaving before fully settling in. Her observations, experiences, feelings, and intuition could have contributed to her contemplation. Her feelings could have been not just about whether her job

was right for her, but also was it worth it for her to uproot herself from her family and familiarity to plant herself into a space where the people and climate were cold. She was faced with thoughts of whether or not she should move back to the east coast. How will her colleagues, family, and mentors feel if she just left? Will things get better? Should she just give it a chance and try to make the best out of her circumstances? Gina had to spend time thinking or mediating about these concepts, while simultaneously being present and enduring the normal challenges of being new and the other challenges which come with being a Black woman in a White space.

When Gina finally decided that it was time to go, although it was liberating in a sense, there was also confusion and uncertainty. Where will she go? How will she pay her bills? Does she have to move back home with her parents? If she has to go home, what will be her game plan? What type of position and new set of colleagues will she encounter in her future position? Will any work environment be able to replicate the family-like environment she experienced as a student at the historically Black college she attended as an undergraduate? How will she explain being in the position for less than one year, to a future employer? Will her future employer see her as the problem and not as the unfortunate recipient of discrimination? There can be anxiety and fear associated with not knowing what the future will bring after making the conscious decision to leave an institution where you experienced gendered racism.

Allison Jamie, contemplated leaving on a number of occasions. She discussed asking her supervisor, after a meeting with the new management, if he wanted her resignation letter that day or at the end of the week. For Allison Jamie to get to a point where she felt the need to say that shows how badly the administrator treated her and how badly she felt during the meeting. A person who feels appreciated and respected would not be so quickly moved to quit. It is clear

that the amount of belittlement, disrespect, and loss of autonomy Allison Jamie felt after that meeting fueled her contemplation.

Coming to work in an environment where your beliefs and practices are different from the administration brings one to question: *What am I doing? Why am I here? Is what I am doing even worth it? Is it worth it to me?* It can be hard for many to understand the internal conflict Allison Jamie endured during her contemplation stage. As a loyal person she did not want to just get up and leave, however her experiences contributed to her thoughts of leaving. As someone who took the position to help the same population she represented, first-generation students of color, it was hard to just remove herself when she knew others depended on her and needed her. Her loyalty and responsibility to her students complicated her contemplation.

Another significant factor which contributed to complicating Allison Jamie's contemplation was her health. It can be difficult for some to imagine and understand what it was like for Allison Jamie to be faced with becoming sick at twenty-six and for her health to worsen by thirty, while simultaneously employed at the institution in which she contemplated leaving. She had been there for her students and had gone above and beyond for her colleagues, but when she needed her colleagues the most they were not the most supportive. Should she feel guilty that she is sick? Should she be thankful that she has a job, especially one which provides health benefits to cover her medical treatment? How will her future supervisor and colleagues view her if she needs to take off for health related issues? During a time when she should be focusing on improving her health and recovering, she has to think about the environment she worked in and how her office was moved to a cubicle, how the upper administration was challenging to work with, and her colleagues not being as supportive of her health related absences. How could she focus on putting the necessary time and energy towards a stress and anxiety producing ordeal,

like job searching, with significant health issues and challenging work conditions? The process of searching for positions, creating and gathering materials, applying, and interviewing requires a lot of work. The normal stressors associated with job searching, coupled with feelings of neither being supported nor seen as a valuable and worthy professional from the upper administration, could have contributed to Allison Jamie remaining in her position years after her initial feelings of wanting to leave. It is therefore, evident that health can add additional stress and further prolong and complicate the contemplation stage.

## **Lessons**

There are lessons embedded in each experience. Gina and Allison Jamie both learned about themselves while employed at their predominantly White universities. They also learned about what they want and need in the future.

Gina's experience at her former institution allowed her to understand what she should be doing. She believed that she went through the experience to figure out what she wants to do with her life. She views the experience as a means to convincing her that she wants to start her own business. Gina understood that having a business or organization that is her own, and not having to report to others, will allow her to be in control. She can be in control of her creativity and time and how her creativity and time will be utilized. Gina's "very restrictive and very controlled" environment is what led her to being convinced that she needs to start her own organization or business. It can be hard to quantify and comprehend just how restricted Gina felt at her former institution, but it is clear that her yearning for self-ownership became more apparent while in that environment. It was in the environment, in which Gina felt was "closed in, and it has a mindset of do as you are told, get the job done, and focus on the job," where she

was able to see that having her own business will be a way for her to be in control and have the ability to “look outside and kind of focus on something else” if she chooses to.

Gina mentioned not wanting to return to a restrictive environment, like her previous institution. She has accepted the fact that while she is planning and working on gaining the capital she needs to start her own organization or business, she will stay employed in higher education. However, after her experience she is more cognizant of what types of institutions she prefers to work for and what students she wants to continue to serve. She wants to work in a smaller institution, a historically Black college or university, or a community college. She wants to work in a space where she can “work with students who look like [her] and not have to feel like [she] can’t.” It is clear that Gina was significantly impacted by her experience at the PWI where she was once employed. It is also evident that her experience also serves as a lesson and a mechanism for her to figure out and be convinced of what she wants and needs.

Allison Jamie’s experience at her former institution also provided her with lessons. She now understands that she needs to work for an institution that supports healthy work-life balance. For Allison Jamie that means, a space that promotes self-care and is supportive of those who may have to take time away for health issues. That also means that she needs to work in a position that does not exploited her time, by requiring her to work evenings and weekends. Those additional hours, which are usually not financially compensated for employees who are paid based on a salary and not hourly, requires time away from family, friends, and other experiences the employee could have been engaging in.

She also learned what she needs from leadership. “I have learned from my career there [that it is important for me to understand] what I need from the leadership, whether it be from my

immediate boss or top administration. I need to know the vision, the goal, I need to know what we are doing and where we are going, what role do you want me to play?" Having this understanding can allow Allison Jamie to better understand her role, plan how she will carry out her duties, and overall be prepared. After working in her former position for nine years, Allison Jamie knows that she needs to work for an organization or institution where the mission is clear, her role in carrying out that mission is clear, and she has more autonomy in how she, in her role, carries out the mission. Because Allison Jamie had this realization after leaving her former institution, it is clear that she will not want to return or go to an environment where she or the leadership do not have a clear understanding of the big picture and mission, because it can lead to confusion, misunderstandings, micromanagement, and can further contribute to worsening other stressors in the workplace.

## **Chapter 6: Theoretical Discussion and Recommendations**

The stories shared in the Chapter 4 depict the experiences faced by some Black women at predominantly White institutions. Two Black women shared their stories. There were also autoethnographic components which allowed me to also share components of my story. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses how the experiences presented in Chapter 4 connect to the theoretical lenses and framework which guided the study. Following the discussion, the next section presents the recommendations and future areas of research inspired through conducting this study.

### **Discussion**

The research questions which guided this study connected to the theoretical perspectives and theoretical framework. The theoretical lenses used to guide this study were Critical Race Theory, Africana Womanism, and Historical Womanist. The WHO Healthy Workplace theoretical framework was also used.

#### **Critical Race Theory.**

Critical Race Theory provided the theoretical context to explore the racialized experiences these women endured. The question which explores the connection between the theory and the demographic researched in this study is represented in elements of the stories shared in Chapter 4. The question is: what elements of CRT are relevant to Black women's experiences as non-faculty at PWIs? Both Gina and Allison Jamie's stories have elements of CRT imbedded in them. The tenets of CRT which are applicable to this study included racism is endemic in American life, Whiteness as property, racial realism, interest convergence, and counter-story.



***Racism is endemic in American life.***

Racism is endemic in American life is a tenet which is evident in both of these women's stories. The foundation of the country these predominantly White institutions of higher education are founded in was built upon a racialized system of oppression, where collectively Whites are positioned at the top and Blacks are systematically positioned at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. Gina discussed the plight of the Black woman and the gendered racialized experiences Black women face in America. She discussed how Black women have to be all things to everyone, including being there for their family, friends, and students while working in higher education. She contrasted her professional experiences of gendered racism with her personal experiences of not having "a partner to cuddle with", which as suggested in the previous chapter appears to be a geographically sensitive issue some Black women in predominantly White spaces disproportionately face. Allison Jamie discussed how her campus was structured as it pertains to race. She mentioned how the upper administration was White but if you go to the cafeteria you will see that it is full of Black cafeteria workers. The systems of oppression in this country are endemic and the institutions these women worked in are no exception.

***Whiteness as property.***

Whiteness as property is another tenet which is evident in both of these women's stories. The predominantly White institutions both Gina and Allison Jamie ultimately left were institutions where Black students, staff, and faculty were in the minority. Their status as Black women at a PWI allowed them to recognize their limitations, in comparison to White men and women, in that space. Both of these women's experiences show that the campuses operated under the notion that Whiteness is property.

Gina discussed how she felt surveilled and unable to exist and move around campus freely. In many ways she did not feel like her Black body was appreciated or accepted at the institution she ultimately left. Gina felt the geographical limitations associated with her Black body being present in a predominantly White office on at a predominantly White university. Whiteness as property can also refer to the act of receiving rewards or acceptance for engaging in norms supported by White people. Gina also mentioned, how “it was very interesting how strategic they were in utilizing people who looked like me, who came in a way that they were going to support me, but when they were in fact supporting me under the condition that I followed certain rules.” The rules she was implying were those which supported Whiteness and were approved by the White people who were in charge in her department and university. Support was removed from her when she made the conscious decision to not follow the rules and script set up for her. Her decision led to sanctions and negative consequences which impacted her experiences on campus.

Allison Jamie also discussed an event where there were approximately 30 or 40 Black women on campus who had an affinity group dinner. She mentioned how moving the event was to her. At this dinner she was able to be in the presence of the Black women with the highest status to the lowest status on campus. This was the highlight of her time while working for nine years at her former institution. Allison Jamie attended an event on campus which demonstrates and in some ways celebrates the rarity of Black women on that particular campus. This affinity dinner symbolized a coming together of the Black women who were scattered throughout campus working and operating amongst the Whiteness of the campus. It is unclear why the affinity dinner, which seemed to be transformative and powerful, only occurred once during Allison Jamie’s tenure. This too could have been connected to a lack of support from the

predominantly White university to provide the space, time, funding, and energy to support such a beneficial event for Black women. It is therefore evident that the tenet of Whiteness as property was also depicted in these women's experiences as non-faculty at PWIs.

***Racial realism.***

Racial realism is a tenet of CRT which is demonstrated in both Gina and Allison Jamie's stories. Gina and Allison Jamie shared their experiential knowledge of what it is like to be Black women in America and more specifically the experiences which led to their voluntary termination from their non-faculty positions at PWIs. Their experiences as Black women allow them to be self-validated and experts on what it means for them to navigate and ultimately leave a space which is predominantly White. Both of these women had to come to terms with the realization that they are Black women and they were operating in White spaces. The realism of race impacted not only their experience, but their thoughts and also how they reflected upon, defined, and operationalized their experiences.

***Interest convergence.***

Interest convergence is also a tenet of CRT which is imbedded in the stories and experiences of the two participants. Gina alluded to the interest convergence when she shares her conceptualizations of feeling as if she was just a face or a token of the department at her former institution. The tokenism she faced and how she believed it was a facade when her colleagues seemed to be genuinely interested in her at the interview. She felt like there was an agenda from the beginning. Once she started in the position she noticed that she, and what she represented, were not accepted in this space. She was just there to diversify the space, to help to warm up the place, from its past issues with Black students and staff. A department that is trying

to move past, or appear to move past, their issues pertaining to race, decided to use Gina as a token. Of course she had her interest in gaining employment after months of being unemployed. Nonetheless the department engaged in interest convergence at her expense.

Allison Jamie did not experience tokenism within her department, because she worked in multicultural student affairs. Her department was racially and ethnically diverse, because it was for students of color. In this office she served students of color, and mostly Black and Brown students. The existence of that office in many ways speaks to interest convergence. It is evident that Black students at predominantly White institutions benefit from having a space on campus which addresses their needs and is a space of exception within a campus rooted in Whiteness. Although many Black students may enjoy having an office where they can see people who look like them, be themselves, and get their needs met, it is also apparent that these spaces benefit White people in a number of ways. Having a multicultural student affairs office as a place where Black and Brown students can go to get their concerns addressed, allows White staff to not have to deal with or be accountable to the needs of Black students at their predominantly White institution. As long as there is a multicultural student affairs office, White staff have a space to which they can send students of color, without taking the extra time and energy to figure out how to better meet the needs of this population. Although, multicultural student affairs offices have many positive attributes for people of color and provide essential services to Black and Brown students, their presence does not debunk or eliminate White supremacy on campus and in some instances, the existence of these offices benefits White people. In regards to racial and spatial politics, these spaces within a White institution are mechanisms which aid in making the lived experiences of students of color on campus better, but they do not contribute to the larger schema of White supremacy and dominance on campus. Allison Jamie was hired to work in a space that

to some degree is inherently rooted in interest convergence and racial or ethnic separation. It is evident that both Gina and Allison Jamie experienced interest convergence in their positions at their PWIs.

### ***Counter-story.***

Counter-story is also a tenet which is represented in the two participants' stories. Not only do the participants' stories present a counter-story of the dominant White narrative which prevails at the PWIs, but they also provide a counter-story to the literature, which disproportionately includes the experiences of Black women faculty in the academy. The stories in Chapter 4 provided a rare opportunity to give voice to a population which was silenced, not only because they are Black women, but also because they are physically removed from the institutions in which their gendered racialized experiences occurred.

It is therefore evident that the participants' stories encompassed elements of Critical Race Theory. This theoretical lens aided in the conceptualization of these women's experiences. The tenets of racism is endemic in American life, Whiteness as property, racial realism, interest convergence, and counter-story, provided a platform in which race could be central in this discussion. The tenets also allowed the opportunity for the experiences of the participants to be conceptualized and understood theoretically.

### ***Africana Womanism.***

Africana Womanism allowed an opportunity for the dual-oppression of being Black and a woman to be conceptualized and addressed. Black women, as a collective group are often viewed as being collectivistic and family oriented. Not being self-centered and therefore caring about others is an underlying concept in Africana Womanism. The often portrayed self-centered

notions associated with traditional feminism are in opposition with Africana Womanism. Elements of this theoretical lens were also present in both of the participants' stories. The question used to guide this component of the study is: How do the ideas which underlie Africana Womanism inform Black women's thoughts and choices during the contemplation stage and upon terminating their non-faculty employment at PWIs?

Gina's story had elements of Africana Womanism. Gina was raised by her Haitian parents, who expressed their views which are rooted in Africana Womanism. Her parents were concerned with her choosing employment that was lucrative and could contribute to not just improving her own circumstances, but also those of her family. They believed that decision-making should not be individualistically focused but instead the needs of the family and social responsibility should be assessed and impact the decision. This concept connects to Africana Womanism because it depicts an expectation of selflessness for Black woman. The decisions, behaviors and actions in which Black women engage are expected to be family-oriented. Gina also discussed her experience, as a Black woman, as having many layers. These layers include advocating for everyone around her including her family. Her role as an advocator, demonstrates that Gina is not taking the selfish route of only being an advocate for herself and caring about her own advances. Instead she has advocated for others even when it meant that she could be criticized or penalized for it. This is an action rooted in Africana Womanism, and the selflessness Black women exhibit.

Gina also indicated that her views and experiences with Black men on campus were positive, with the exception of one who seemed to be working in a manner that did not have her best interest in mind. Gina mentioned feeling a sense of connection and solidarity with Black

males on the campus she ultimately left, particularly with the Black male who was hired with her. It is clear that Gina also embodies that tenet of Africana Womanism.

When Gina discussed missing her family when living in the Midwest, and being away from the culture she embraced and is a product of, there are elements of Africana Womanism that are suggested and can be inferred. Gina mentioned that her issues were larger than her immediate experiences in her department and on campus. She did not have her family near her. Her realization that her experience could have been different if her family was near shows how essential and important family is in the Black community. As a Black woman she understood that moving back to be closer to her family was more important to her than staying and ultimately advancing professionally. This also brings up the question of whether Gina would have stayed if her family was there or if her employment would have provided an added benefit to her family would she have continued to endure the experiences which ultimately contributed to her departure? Although the circumstances did not allow for more insight into this assertion, it is still clear that Gina exhibited elements of Africana Womanism in her thoughts and actions.

Allison Jamie's story also had elements of Africana Womanism. Not only does she speak favorably about her father, she is also married to a Black man. Her language was never derogatory and based on her stories she had positive interactions with Black males on campus.

Allison Jamie also discussed her health issues and how they intensified while she continued to work in her position. She would often push herself to go to work even if she was sick and should have taken the time away to care for herself, because she felt an obligation to be there. Her views were aligned with Africana Womanism in the sense that she would sacrifice her own health and recovery to go to work and be able to work with the students who needed her

and the staff who depended on her. She pushed herself until her body would not allow her to continue to do so. Her actions connect to Africana Womanism because they emphasize the notion that it is not about the individual but instead the collective, the students, her office staff, and the campus at large.

Another aspect of Allison Jamie's narrative which connects to Africana Womanism is evident in her depiction of her loyalty to her supervisor and the culture of exhibiting behavior and decision-making capability which reflects positively on your supervisor. Having a loyalty to her supervisor is partly responsible for her staying in the position she ultimately left for close to a decade. In this position she did not focus on what was best for her or her own career trajectory. Her thoughts were on what was best for the center, the students she served, the staff that depended on her, and the campus that depended on this center to address the needs of students of color. Allison Jamie also had to operate in a space where her decisions could not be reflective of her own beliefs and desires but instead what would make her supervisor be seen in the most favorable way, which will in turn make his supervisor look the most favorable. These are also ways in which elements of Africana Womanism was present in Allison Jamie's story.

The participants' stories demonstrated the underlying concepts of Africana Womanism. Africana Womanism is therefore, used as a theoretical lens to provide deeper understanding of the experiences and thought processes these women experienced before voluntarily terminating their employment from a PWI. This lens helped to unpack the dual-oppression Black women face, and to provide the proper theoretical context in understanding how many Black women's thoughts and actions are not self-centered, and in fact are often for the betterment of their family, both her biological family and also the collective Black family.



### **Historical Womanist.**

Historical Womanist is another theoretical lens which was used to guide this study. This theoretical lens provides the context for Black women, who experience dual-oppression, to be situated into a historical context of an exploitative and capitalistic society. Historical Womanist provided the lens to explore Black women's experiences as producers, and the ability to theoretically focus on the intersectionality and multiplicity of Black women workers in America. The question which helped guided this component of the study is: In what ways are elements of Historical Womanist apparent in the lives and choices of Black women who ultimately departed the PWI they were once employed?

Both Gina and Allison Jamie's stories exhibited elements of Historical Womanist. These women disconnected themselves from their labor location, and stopped being producers at their former predominantly White universities. Gina discussed how her financial circumstances kept her in the position for longer than she wanted to stay. The capitalistic society and the financial responsibilities which were present in her life definitely impacted her contemplation stage. Her freedom to choose if and when she will leave the position, in which she experienced gendered racism, was impacted by her having to pay back student loans and other financial responsibilities.

Allison Jamie discussed how she decided to take the job, because she did not want to only be a receptionist. She wanted to advance into a position that was in her area of expertise. In a capitalistic society, where there is a hierarchy of positions, she was looking for a position that would put her on the path to upward mobility. She discussed that the pay was not as much as she would have liked for it to be, but the position would provide her the opportunity to gain

the experiences she needed to advance within her profession. This also speaks to elements of Historical Womanist; it shows how directly embedded economic capital was to her, and how it was even embedded in her thoughts when she applied for the position.

Therefore, elements of Historical Womanist are present throughout these women's stories. Both women experienced oppression as laborers, as Black, and as women. This lens allowed for the understanding of the intersectionality of these identities, and to provide a theoretical context for the multiplicity of being employed Black women in a White space.

### **WHO Healthy Workplace.**

The WHO Healthy Workplace theoretical framework provided the structure to explore the components which contribute to a healthy or unhealthy workplace. During the interviews both women discussed their experiences both positive and negative which contributed to their departure or could have potentially contributed to their retention. The two questions which guided this area of the study are the following: In what ways, if any, did the physical work environment, psychosocial work environment, personal health resources, and/or enterprise community involvement contribute to an unhealthy workplace and Black women's contemplation and ultimate choice to voluntarily terminate their non-faculty employment at a PWI? In what ways, if any, did the physical work environment, psychosocial work environment, personal health resources, and/or enterprise community involvement could have contributed to retaining these women?

### ***The physical work environment.***

The physical work environment can significantly impact how people feel about their job. The physical work environment can contribute to employees having positive or negative feelings

about their place of employment. In the positions that both participants occupied, the nature of their work required them to be confined to their office space during most of the duration of their work days. This meant that the space in which they were assigned became a central fixture in their days, in their week, and in their lives.

Gina's physical work environment definitely contributed to her leaving her former institution. She mentioned that the walls were white and lacked any representations of color or diversity. The space was just bland and resembled a medical facility, rather than an inviting space for students. The space also made her feel surveilled and not trusted because she was constantly monitored through the glass window facing the hallway near her door. Besides having a space of comfort that represents who she is as a Black woman, her space made her feel even more isolated and closed in. Gina felt contained, in addition to the feelings evoked from being in a space where she was subject to constant inspection. She had no window to see outside. This space, in her mind, promoted a "do as you are told" mentality. Gina discussed how oppressive her space felt and how her physical work environment became a place she no longer wanted to come to.

Allison Jamie endured a change in her physical work environment. When she first started she had an office that she liked. The space provided her with privacy and she was afforded the ability to personalize it. With the change of management came an office change for her department, which led to a move to a smaller and not as appealing space. Allison Jamie did not like having to give up her office to move to a shared cubicle with no privacy with a coworker who did not make things easier for her. Allison Jamie mentioned how this space was driving her crazy. With her working in a space for minority students, it can be inferred that there is some correlation between the best office spaces being reserved for what the university values and the

physical environments designated for Black bodies to be. It brings to question if it was intentional for the unit to move because the space in which the multicultural student affairs office once occupied was seen as more valuable and therefore a better space for an office for all demographics at the predominantly White institution. It is not clear what the rationale was behind the move and if it was in fact a racial, spatial move that was political and depicted what the university valued and expressed through their decision-making. Regardless of the reason which ignited the move, it is clear that Allison Jamie was significantly impacted by the additional stressors it added to her work environment and the circumstances she already faced.

***The psychosocial work environment.***

The psychosocial work environment was also a factor which contributed to both Gina and Allison Jamie having negative experiences while working at their former PWIs. Both women had issues with the office culture and the policies and practices. These factors contributed to them leaving.

Gina discussed how she felt so different in comparison to her coworkers. The values, practices, and beliefs of her coworkers were different from her own. She felt as if it was not only because the space was predominantly White, but also because it was regionally different than what she was used to, and not in a positive way. Since Gina never felt like she connected to the culture of the department or campus it was not hard for her to detach from the institution when she knew it was time to go. To her she felt like the institution did not represent or appreciate her culture, values, beliefs, and practices. The psychosocial work environment was therefore a factor that contributed to Gina voluntarily departing her former institution.

Allison Jamie discussed how at one point she believed she fit in with the office culture and agreed with the values and practices represented in the space. After administrative changes were put in place she felt as if she no longer fit in with the culture of the office. Having to feel like she had to focus on making her supervisor look favorable is another experience which contributed to Allison Jamie feeling as if the culture went against her own judgement and professional consciousness. It is therefore clear that the psychosocial work environment not only changed during Allison Jamie's nine year tenure at the center, but it also contributed to her knowing that it was time for her to move on and depart her former institution.

***The personal health resources.***

The personal health resources represent the health services available to employees. It also includes how an institution supports or motivates their employees in improving or maintaining their physical or mental health. Both Gina and Allison Jamie discussed instances in which, their jobs were in conflict with their health.

Gina discussed having headaches and issues with sleeping because of her workplace environment. To handle it and attempt to improve her health while there she took a few personal days from work, where she was sick of working in her office and not actually physically sick. She knew that the community had proper facilities to cover any treatment that she may have needed, but on one occasion when she wanted to meet with a Black counselor on campus she was unable to schedule an immediate appointment. At the time the only Black male counselor was unavailable and would not be able to meet with her until five months later. That caused frustration with Gina, because when she decided to seek help, operating within and in dealing with her work environment, she was unable to utilize the services with someone who she

believed would have been able to understand her and her circumstances. When attempting to utilize the personal health resources on campus did not work, Gina found other ways to deal with her workplace stressors. She utilized instant messaging with two of her close Black colleagues; she spent time out in nature, and also decided to take some personal days away from work. These measures helped Gina manage and minimize her stress associated with work, but they were not sufficient enough to retain her. To go back to a space where she had her family, the culture, and spiritual connection became more obvious and ultimately contributed to Gina's return to the east coast.

Allison Jamie discussed the health issues she faced while working at her former institution. She became sick at twenty-six and at the age of thirty her health issues worsened. She had to begin to focus on her health issues. She was no longer able to work through her pain and other symptoms associated with her illness; her body began to shut down. Allison Jamie discussed how her supervisor and colleagues stopped being as supportive to her when her health issues kept her out of work. She felt guilty for being sick and not being able to be there. When she needed her colleagues the most, they were not as open, concerned, or understanding of her circumstances. If her colleagues were more supportive she believed it would have been harder for her to leave the center. Although the insurance benefits she received from the institution allowed her to see the doctors she needed to go to for treatment, she did not have the adequate support from her colleagues. It is therefore obvious that the lack of support as it pertains to the personal health resources contributed to it being much easier for Allison Jamie to leave the institution.

*The enterprise community.*

The enterprise community affects employees in both negative and positive ways. The community in which the university is situated also has a profound impact on those employed there. The place in which one works is situated in a city or town which has a history, social demographics and a racial temperament. Both Gina and Allison Jamie were to some degree affected by the community surrounding the universities in which they worked.

Gina was negatively impacted by the community she lived in while working at the university she terminated her employment from. She noticed the lack of diversity and how she was perceived as a Black woman with locs. She mentioned how insincere the people were in the town and how the open seats near her on the bus remained empty because the White passengers did not want to sit near her. Gina believed that there was nothing in that area that would have kept her there as it pertains to the community.

Allison Jamie had more of a positive experience with the community in which the university was situated. She had been a member of the community for fourteen years. She was used to the area, before she accepted the position. She was active in her church and other organizations which allowed her to have an outlet and sense of community in the area. Unlike Gina, she did not move to this community just for a job. She also did not live there alone; she had her husband and family in the space with her. Therefore, the city which surrounded the university did not contribute negatively to her experience.

It is therefore evident that the WHO Healthy Workplace theoretical framework provided the four avenues of influence in which the women could discuss and conceptualize their work experiences. This framework allowed the women to reflect on the ways in which the physical work environment, psychosocial work environment, personal health resources, and enterprise

community involvement impacted their experiences and the ways in which these areas of influence could have been an element of retention or a contributing factor to their departures.

### **Recommendations and Future Research**

In addition to the information provided through the themes and analysis surrounding the theoretical lenses and framework, there are other understandings yielded from this study. These understandings have sparked recommendations and future research. This section provides recommendations for hiring units in institutions of higher education, especially at predominantly White institutions, for Black women in the field, or thinking about entering the field, of higher education, and for the graduate preparatory programs which are responsible for preparing aspiring student affairs professionals.

This research is not about exposing and discrediting the reputation of specific departments or institutions. It is however beneficial for departments and institutions to recognize how some Black women internalize and conceptualized their experiences in predominantly White workspaces or while employed at predominantly White colleges or universities. It is important for these stories to be shared, not only for the sake of the individuals but also for departments and colleges and universities. The institutions, especially the institutions that engage in the types of practices mentioned, should be able to have an understanding about the detrimental impact these behaviors can have on Black women. Sometimes the effect gendered racism has on some Black women is not shown to the outside world. “Usually, when people talk about the ‘strength’ of black women they are referring to the way in which they perceive black women coping with oppression” (hooks, 1981, p. 6). The stories discussed in Chapter 4 demonstrate the strength of Black women and their ways of coping with and challenging the



oppressive environments they navigate. Sometimes the strength of Black women gives employers and colleagues the impression that we are either in agreement with or are not fazed by the practices and policies imposed on us. The stories mentioned, can provide a better understanding of the psychological, and in some cases physical impact, these experiences have on the Black women who work at PWIs. Therefore, the stories also demonstrate the notion that although Black women in the workplace can appear to not be affected by the added challenges faced in predominantly White spaces there can be many challenging factors present in that space that are being dealt with internally or outside of the work environment.

It is important for institutions of higher education to understand that some Black women do not express their dissatisfaction or the effects of their workspace circumstances. The strength and ways in which Black women cope with oppressive conditions should not be taken as meaning that there are no issues. It is still the responsibility of the institutions and campus units to ensure their policies and practices are not discriminatory or disadvantage Black women. To further unpack and understand the hidden suffering which may reside underneath a persona of strength, I plan to further research how Black women preform and present strength as a coping mechanism in the workplace, and particularly at PWIs.

Institutions of higher education, particularly predominantly White colleges and universities often discuss wanting to diversify their staff. They are often hoping to hire more people of color and in some cases more women. It is important for these institutions to not only recruit Black women but also make the spaces Black women will occupy on campus more inviting and accepting. It is important for supervisors and colleagues on campuses to become more cognizant of the types of environments they create, or uncaringly continue to navigate. Many departments focus on how they can better meet the needs of students. Based on this

research, I have a recommendation for some of the departments, especially those who pride themselves on being student-centered. This recommendation is for departments to continue to focus on meeting the needs and expectations of students, but to also remember the importance, and added benefit to students, if employees have higher morale and feel a sense of respect and mattering. Not only could departments' focus on increasing morale and demonstrating that employees are respected and matter, can connect to increased employee productivity, but it can also have an impact on the recruitment and retention of students, particularly students of color. This could lead to an unintentional way for the institution to recruit and retain more people of color, both students and staff.

As a future area of study it would be interesting to explore if there is a connection between institutions with relatively positive experiences for Black women and an increase in recruitment and retention of Black students on campus. It would be interesting to see the trends. It could show that institutions have issues with not only Black women who are staff on campus, but also Black students. There can be other variations whereas recruitment trends can be seen as positive for both Black women professionals and Black students, but the retention aspect for both could show that there are challenges the institutions are facing and a disconnect between recruitment and retention.

Conducting this research also highlighted the importance of applicants, especially those new to the field of higher education, needing to know the culture of the campuses in which they are planning to work for. An applicant's investigation and analysis of the institution needs to go further than just asking the search committee questions about diversity. The investigation can include looking at the organizational structure, seeing where and how people are positioned on campus, and also the information students, outside of the handpicked students who may be

represented during the interview process, are discussing the institution. Students do not seem to be as hesitant in discussing the issues and challenges the college or university may face, especially as it pertains to injustices or discrimination. Applicants can find various ways to obtain valuable information about whether or not an institution fits in with their values, beliefs, needs, and wants.

Future research surrounding how Black women engage the job search process in higher education can be insightful. This research can help to recognize if Black women who voluntarily terminate their employment at PWIs, in which they encounter issues of gendered racism, took the time and energy to thoroughly investigate the institutional profile and culture. It can also provide some insight into who may be responsible for teaching or sharing these investigative techniques during the job search process. Is it the responsibility of student affairs programs to prepare perspective job applicants? Should mentors share these nuggets of knowledge? Or is it the responsibility of the often naïve applicant to just live and learn these skills during their tenure in higher education?

This research has also brought up another notion which suggests a disconnection between what the participants' perceptions of the field of higher education student affairs were and their actual experiences. Both Gina and Allison Jamie's stories spoke to the notion that an individual can enjoy their experience as an enrolled student or summer researcher at an institution, but can be dissatisfied with their experiences as a full-time working professional at the same institution. In Gina's case as a graduate research intern, she spoke about her enjoyment and sense of belonging at the institution because of all of the diversity she was amongst while immersed in the summer program on campus. Upon joining the institution as an academic professional she quickly recognized the stark differences she faced in her current role at the same institution.

Allison Jamie realized that a place she grew to enjoy as a student was not as enjoyable and positive to work for. With the stories provided as well as my recommendation, I hope that institutions of higher education, especially predominantly and historically White colleges or universities, put more attention and resources to creating a more accepting and inclusive environment, not just for students, but for employees as well.

Both participants also discussed feeling naïve about what their actual experiences would be while working in higher education after completing their master's degree programs. They both discussed not feeling prepared for understanding the politics, practices, and the culture at specific workplaces in higher education. This suggested that there is a disconnection between what the participants' perceived based on what they learned and encountered in their program and the reality of their experiences once employed in the field of higher education. The naivety was present in both of the participants' stories and is also discussed in the opening of the first chapter, in my discussion of a reflection I wrote in the last semester of my master's program. Although I felt like my program prepared me in many ways to work in higher education, I did not have the realization of what it meant to work in higher education while being a Black woman. We spent significant time discussing the issues Black students face in college, but there seemed to have never been a conversation which connects this phenomenon, that since Black students are facing these issues on predominantly White campuses is it possible for Black staff to also face these issues of discrimination, tokenism, and microaggressions? Could the issues of Black staff be potentially worse? As a masters student I was so infatuated and concerned about the state of Black students on the campuses of PWIs that I did not notice that these same institutions can be a space where Black staff can also be discriminated against.

Research pertaining specifically to Black women and their perceptions of higher education and their job one or post master's program employment experiences, is needed. This research can potentially provide valuable insight and areas of growth for the curriculum and practicum experiences represented in student affairs practitioner-based programs. It is important to ensure that these programs are adequately preparing their students and not allowing budding student affairs professionals to enter into the workforce unaware of the stark realities of what working in higher education can really be.

None of the recommendations are geared towards policy, and I wanted to take a moment to address that. I do not believe that policy can erase racism or sexism. Both Gina and Allison Jamie were employed at institutions who publicly displayed equal opportunity policy statements. One of the institutions have proudly publicized that they are the recipient of an award for 2014 for exhibiting outstanding strides and progress as it pertains to their campus diversity and inclusion. The same institution, who was rewarded for diversity and inclusion, was described by one of the participants as lacking racial diversity and inclusion. She also endured gendered racism during the year the award was granted. It brings to question, how can the same institution, where Black women can encounter gendered racism, be awarded and commended for their diversity and inclusion? How much of what is happening on the *institutional level*, which garners such awards, is actually being displayed and implemented on more of an individual level in the offices and departments that comprises the institution? It also brings up this notion of who deems these spaces diverse and inclusive? By whose definition and standard are these places diverse and inclusive? Who conducted the assessment? Whose voices were included, or purposely excluded, in awarding this institution that distinction? This is an institutional award, which apparently depicts the institution's ability to attract, interview, and hire a diverse pool of

applicants. It shows that the institution, based on specific criteria, has excelled in actualizing the equal opportunity policy, but it does not address the fundamental issues of racism and sexism.

Institutions are seen as spaces with a conglomerate of views and people; however some beliefs and voices prevail and are heard more loudly. It is important for institutions to understand that gendered racism is an issue, and getting them to admit and be open to wanting to change is needed before any policy or even discussions of policy development can be held. Providing a policy to address this issue seems more of a way to protect the institutions, where gendered sexism is endured. A policy can be seen as a way to impress others and pacify the issue, rather than actually addressing it. A policy recommendation would be yet another example of “peaks of progress” that do not eradicate White Supremacy, but instead continue to “maintain white dominance.” A policy does not require deep understanding of the issues. Real concrete solutions rather than rhetoric and nicely manicured statements are needed, but those cannot be actualized and implemented without at least the admittance of responsibility or ownership of the institution’s wrongful actions in perpetuating or protecting those who treat Black women as *unwanted guests*.

## **In Conclusion**

Conducting this study has allowed me to gain a better understanding of the experiences of other Black women, who voluntarily terminated their non-faculty employment at predominantly White institutions. I also had the opportunity to better reflect on my own experiences which led to my own departure from a PWI. Conducting this study has contributed to my own healing and ability to confront, reflect upon, conceptualize, and propel forward from my experiences. This study allowed for the stories of two Black women to be heard. The voices of two women, who

would have otherwise left those stories hidden under their strength, now have their stories shared and available for others to see.

## References

- Adisa, O. P. (1994). Rocking in the sunlight: Stress and Black women. In White, E. C. *The Black women's health book: Speaking for ourselves*. Seattle: The Seal Press.
- Andersen, M. (2010). The nexus of race and gender: Parallels, linkages, and divergences in race and gender studies. In P. Collins, & J. Solomos (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of race and ethnic studies*. (pp. 166-188). London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Bell, D. (1980). Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Principle. *Harvard Law Review*, 93, 518-533.
- Bell, D. A. (1987). *And We Are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bell, D. A. (1992). Racial realism. *Connecticut Law Review*, 24(2), 363-380.
- Bell, D. A. (1995). Who's afraid of critical race theory. *University of Illinois Law Review*, 1995(4), 893-910.
- Brown, A. H. (2001). African American women of inspiration. In Sheared, V., & Sissel, P. A. (2001) *Making space: Merging theory and practice in adult education* (pp. 213-226). Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Burton, J. (2010). WHO healthy workplace framework and model: Background and supporting literature and practices. *Submitted to Evelyn Kortum, WHO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland*.
- Byrne, M. M. (2001). Evaluating findings of qualitative research. *AORN Journal*, 73, 703-704.
- Carruthers, I. E. (1980). Africanity and the Black woman. *Black Books Bulletin*, 6, 14-20, 71.
- Cole, J. B. (1997). *Ten years at Spelman: Reflections on a special journey*. Keynote address presented at Otelia Cromwell Day Symposium at Smith College, North Hampton, MA.
- Collins, P. H. (1986). Learning from the outside within: The sociological significance of Black



- feminist thought. *Social Problems*, 33(6), S14-S32.
- Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Collins, P. H. (1996). What's in a name? Womanism, Black feminism, and beyond. *The Black Scholar*, 26(1), 9-17.
- Collins, P. H. (2000). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of Empowerment, Volume 2*. New York: Routledge.
- Cooper, A. J. (1892). A voice from the South. Xexia, Ohio: The Aldine Printing House.
- Retrieved from North Carolina Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- <<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/cooper/cooper.html>>
- Cortazzi, M. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. London: Falmer Press.
- Crawford, E. (1993). Feminism in Academe: The race factor. *Black Issues in Higher Education* 10 (1, March).
- Crenshaw, K.W. (2002). The First Decade: Critical Reflections, or "A Foot in the Closing Door."
- In Valdes, F., Culp, J. M., & Harris, A. P. (2002). *Crossroads, Directions, and a New Critical Race Theory*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among the five traditions* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Custer, D. (2014). Autoethnography as a transformative research method. *Qualitative Report*, 19(37), 1-13.
- Decuir, J., & Dixson, A. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher*, 33, 26-31.
- Delgado, R. (1995). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

- Delgado Bernal, D., & Villalpando, O. (2010). An apartheid of knowledge in academia: The struggle over the “legitimate” knowledge of faculty of color. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 35(2), 169-180.
- Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2000). Aversive racism and selection decisions: 1989 and 1999. *Psychological Science*, 11, 315-319.
- DuBois, W.E.B. (1897). The Conversation of Races. In N. Hugins, *Writings*, ed. (pp. 815-826). New York: Library of America.
- Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D., & Cooper, C. (2010). *Bullying and harassment in the workplace: Developments in theory, research, and practice, second edition*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press Taylor & Francis Group.
- Farmer, R. (1993). Place but not important: The race of inclusion in the academe. In J. James & R. Farmer (Eds.), *Spirit, space, & survival: African American women in (White) academe* (pp. 196-217). New York: Routledge Press.
- Fine, E., & Handelsman, J. (2010). Benefits and Challenges of Diversity in Academic Setting, second edition. *Women in Science & Engineering Leadership Institute University of Wisconsin-Madison (WISELI)*.
- Gasman, M., & Hilton, A. (2012). Mixed motivations, mixed results: A history of law legislation, historically black colleges and universities and interest convergence. *Teachers College Record*, 114(7) 1-20.
- Generett, G. G., & Cozart, S. (2011). The spirit bears witness: Reflections of two Black women’s journey in the academy. *Negro Education Review*, 62, 141-165.
- Glenn, E. N. (1991). Racial ethnic women’s labor: The intersection of race, gender, and class oppression. In Blumberg, R. L. *Gender, family and economy: The triple overlap* (pp. 173-200). Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

- Gregory, S. T. (1995). *Black women in the academy: The secrets to success and achievement*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Gregory, S. T. (2001). Black faculty women in the academy: History, status, and future. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 70(3), 124-138.
- Hall, C. J., Everett, J. E., & Hamilton-Mason, J. (2012). Black women talk about workplace stress and how they cope. *Journal of Black Studies*, 43, 2, 207-226.
- Harley, D. A. (2008). Maids of academe: African American women faculty at predominantly White institutions. *Journal of African American Studies* 12, 1, pp. 19-36.
- Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as property. *106 Harvard Law Review* 1707.
- Hicken, M. T., Lee, H., Morenoff, J., House, J. S., & Williams, D. R. (2014). Racial/ethnic disparities in hypertension prevalence: Reconsidering the role of chronic stress. *American Journal of Public Health*, 104, 1, 117-123.
- Hirald, P. (2010). The role of critical race theory in higher education. *The Vermont Connection*, 31, 53-59.
- hooks, bell. (1981). *Ain't I a woman: Black women and feminism*. Boston: South End Press.
- hooks, bell. (1984). *Feminist theory: From margin to center*. Boston: South End Press.
- hooks, bell. (1996a). *Bone Black: Memories of girlhood*. New York: Henry Holt.
- hooks, bell. (1996b). *Reel to real: Race, sex, and class at the movies*. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, bell. (2005). *Sister of the yam: Black women and self-recovery*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Hudson-Weems, C. (1993). Africana womanism. In Phillips, L. (2006). *The Womanist Reader*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Hudson-Weems, C. (1998). Self-naming and self-definition: An agenda for survival. *Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora* (pp. 449-452). Ed. Obiama Nnaemeka. Trenton: Africa World Press.

- Hudson-Weems, C. (2000). Africana womanism: an overview. In D. Aldridge & C. Young (EDs), *Out of the Revolution: The Development of Africana Studies* (pp. 205-217). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Hudson-Weems, C. (2004). *Africana womanism: Reclaiming ourselves*. Troy: Michigan: Bedford Publishers.
- Hudson-Weems, C. (2009). *Africana womanism & race & gender in the presidential candidacy of Barack Obama*. Bloomington, IN: Author House.
- Hughes, D., & Dodge, M. (1997). African American women in the workplace: Relationships between job conditions, racial bias at work, and perceived job quality. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 25, 5, 581-599
- Hull, G. T., Bell-Scott, P., & Smith, B. (1982). *All the women are White, all the Blacks are men, but some of us are brave: Black women's studies*. Old Westbury, N.Y: Feminist Press.
- Jones, C. (1949). An end to the neglect of the problems of the Negro woman! In Guy-Sheftall (1995) *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, (pp.107-124). New York, NY: The New Press.
- Jones, C., & Shorter-Gooden, K. (2003). *Shifting: The double lives of Black women in America*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Jones, S. R. (2009). Constructing identities at the intersections: An autoethnographic exploration of multiple dimensions of identities. *Journal of College Student Development*, 50, 287-304.
- King, D. K. (1992). Unraveling fabric, missing the beat: Class and gender in Afro-American social issues. *Black Scholar*, 22, 3, 36-44.
- Krieger, N., Waterman, P. D., Hartman, C., Bates, L. M., Stoddard, A. M., Quinn, G. S. S., & Barbeau, E. M. (2006). Social hazards on the job: Workplace abuse, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination—A study of Black, Latino and White low-income women and

- men workers in the United States. *International Journal of Health Services* 36, 51-85.
- Ladson-Billings, G. & Tate IV, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. In A. D. Dixson, & C. K. Rousseau (Eds.), *Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song* (pp. 11-30). New York: Routledge.
- Lewis, S. F. (1997). Africana feminism: An alternative paradigm for Black women in the Academy. In L. Benjamin (Ed.), *Black women in the academy: Promises and perils* (pp. 41-52). Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Lorde, A. (1984). Scratching the surface: Some notes on barriers to women and loving" *Sister Outside: Essays and Speeches*. New York: Ten Speed Press.
- Lynn, M., & Parker, L. 2006. Critical race studies in education: Examining a decade of research on U.S. Schools. *The Urban Review*, 38(4), 257-290.
- Mazama, A. (2003). *Afrocentric paradigm*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- Mena, J. A., & Saucier, P. K. (2014). "Don't let me be misunderstood": Nina Simone's Africana Womanism. *Journal of Black Studies*, 45(3), 247-265.
- Norris, A. N. (2012). Rural women, anti-poverty strategies, and Black feminist thought. *Sociological Spectrum*, 32(5), 449-461.
- Omolade, B. (1994). *The rising song of African American women*. New York: Routledge.
- Raab, D. (2013). Transpersonal approaches to autoethnographic research and writing. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(42), 1-19.
- Reed, P. Y. A. (2001). Africana womanism and Africana feminism: A philosophical, literary, and cosmological dialectic on family. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, 25, 168-176.
- Riessman, C. K. (2003). Narrative analysis. In Lewis, M. S., Bryman, A., Futing Liao, T. *The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*, 3.
- Rooks, N. (2001). Wearing your race wrong: hair, drama, and politics of representation for African American women at play on the battlefield. In M. Bennet & V. D. Dickerson,

- (Eds.). *Recovering the Black female body: Self-representations by African-American women* (pp. 279-283). New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Rousseau, C. (2013). Historical womanist theory: Re-visioning Black feminist thought. *Race, Gender, & Class* 20(3-4), 191-204.
- Rousseau, C. & Dixon A. D. (2006). The first day of school: A CRT story. In A. D. Dixon, & C. K. Rousseau (Eds.), *Critical race theory in education: All God's children got a song* (pp. 57-65). New York: Routledge.
- Smedley, A. & Smedley, B. D. (2005). Race as biology is fiction, racism as a social problem is real: Anthropological and historical perspectives on the social construction of race. *American Psychologist*, 60(1), 16-26.
- Stephens, R. J., Keaveny, M., & Patton, V. K. (2002). "Come colour my rainbow": Themes of Africana womanism in the poetic vision of Audrey Kathryn Bullet. *Journal of Black Studies*, 32, 4, 464-479.
- St. Jean, Y., & Feagin, J. (1998). *Double burden: Black women and everyday racism*. New York: NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., & Holder, A. M. B. (2008). Racial microaggressions in the life experiences of Black Americans. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 39(3), 329-336.
- Sue, D. W., Nadal, K. L., Capodilupo, C. M., Lin, A. I., Torino, G. C., & Rivera, D. P. (2008). Racial microaggressions against Black Americans: Implications for counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 86(3). 330-338.
- Sullivan, S. (2006). *Revealing Whiteness: The unconscious habits of racial privilege*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Tate IV, W. F. (2005). Ethics, engineering, and the challenge of racial reform in education. In A. D. Dixon, & C. K. Rousseau (Eds.), *Critical race theory in education: All God's*

*children got a song* (pp. 267-273). New York: Routledge.

Thomas, A. J., Witherspoon, K. M., & Speight, S. L. (2008). Gendered racism, psychological distress, and coping styles of African American women. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 14*(4), 307-314.

Thomas, G., & Hollenshead, C. (2001). Resisting from the margins: The coping strategies of Black women and other women of color faculty members at a research university. *The Journal of Negro Education, 70*, 166-175.

Turner, C. S. V. (2000). Defining success: Promotion and tenure—Planning for each career stage and beyond. In M. Garcia (Ed.), *Succeeding in an academic career: A guide for faculty of color* (pp. 111-140). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Women in the labor force: A databook. December 2014.

<<http://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/cps/women-in-the-labor-force-a-databook-2014.pdf>>

Wilder, C. S. (2013). *Ebony & ivy: Race, slavery, and the history of America's universities*. New York: Bloomsburg Press.

Williams, P. J. (1987). Alchemical notes: Reconstructing ideas from deconstructed rights. In R. Delgado & J. Stefancic (Eds), *Critical race theory: The cutting edge* (pp. 80-90). Philadelphia: Temple University.

Wilson, M. L. (2002). African and African American storytelling. *Tar Heel Junior Historian 41*, 2.

## Appendix A

### Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Letter

#### UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects  
528 East Green Street  
Suite 203  
Champaign, IL 61820



March 30, 2015

Denice Hood  
Ed Organization and Leadership  
356 Education Bldg  
1310 S Sixth St  
Champaign, IL 61820

RE: *Unwanted Guests: Black Women Who Contemplated and Then Voluntarily Terminated Their Non-Faculty Employment at Predominantly White Institutions of Higher Education*  
IRB Protocol Number: 15485

Dear Dr. Hood:

Thank you very much for forwarding the modifications to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board (IRB) office for your project entitled *Unwanted Guests: Black Women Who Contemplated and Then Voluntarily Terminated Their Non-Faculty Employment at Predominantly White Institutions of Higher Education*. I will officially note for the record that these minor modifications to the original project, as noted in your correspondence received March 24, 2015: changing title from "Unwanted Guests: Black Women Who Contemplated and Then Voluntarily Terminated Their Non-Faculty Employment at Predominately White Institutions of Higher Education" to "Unwanted Guests: Black Women Who Contemplated and Then Voluntarily Terminated Their Non-Faculty Employment at Predominantly White Institutions of Higher Education", have been approved. The expiration date for this protocol, IRB number 15485, is 01/25/2016. The risk designation applied to your project is *no more than minimal risk*.

Please note that additional modifications to your project need to be submitted to the IRB for review and approval before the modifications are initiated. To submit modifications to your protocol, please complete the IRB Research Amendment Form (see <http://irb.illinois.edu/?q=forms-and-instructions/research-amendments.html>). Unless modifications are made to this project, no further submittals are required to the IRB.

We appreciate your conscientious adherence to the requirements of human subjects research. If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me at the OPRS office, or visit our website at <http://www.irb.illinois.edu>.

Sincerely,

Anita Balgopal, PhD  
Director, Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

c: Jovaughn Barnard



## Appendix B

### Email That Contains the Consent Form and the Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. Please click on the following link for the survey.

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1932874/Black-Women-Who-Terminated-Their-Non-Faculty-Employment-at-PWIs>

#### Consent Form (page 1 of survey)

Purpose and Procedures: This study, conducted by Jovaughn Barnard, a Ph.D. student in Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is under the direction of Dr. Denise Hood. This study is intended to tell the stories of Black women who voluntarily terminated their employment at a predominantly White institution (PWI). As a participant you will first be asked to complete the following survey (estimated duration is 7-10 minutes), then participate in two phone interviews (estimated duration of the first interview is 30-45 minutes and the second interview is 60 minutes), and then review the transcriptions of the interviews and reply to a reflective prompt (estimated duration is 30-45 minutes). It is the interviewer's preference to record the two phone interviews; however it is optional and will only occur with the interviewee's permission.

I give permission for my interview to be audio recorded    ☐ Yes    ☐ No

Voluntariness: Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, discontinue participation, or skip any questions you do not wish to answer at any time. Your decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your grades at, status at, or future relations with the University of Illinois.

Risks and Benefits: The risks to participants are minimal and the only potential consequences for participation in this study can be remembering and discussing a traumatic work experience. The benefits for the participants can be feeling liberated for being able to share their story. This study can also provide some level of closure for participants.

Confidentiality: There will be no personally identifying information such as name on any documents. In the event of publication of this research, no personally identifying information

will be disclosed. To make sure your participation is confidential, it is important to not provide any personally identifying information during data collections. It is an important goal of the researcher to not be detrimental to the reputation of the institutions discussed in the study, therefore disclosing the institution is not warranted or required by the researcher.

Who to Contact with Questions: Questions about this research study should be directed to me by contacting me by phone at 410-212-2725 or through email at [jbarnar2@illinois.edu](mailto:jbarnar2@illinois.edu). You can also feel free to contact the primary investigator and person supervising my research, Dr. Denice Hood, an Assistant Professor in Education Policy, Organization, and Leadership. She can be reached by phone at 217-244-1884 or through email at [dwhood@illinois.edu](mailto:dwhood@illinois.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study or any concerns or complaints, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 (collect calls will be accepted if you identify yourself as a research participant) or via email at [irb@illinois.edu](mailto:irb@illinois.edu). Please print a copy of this consent form for your records, if you so desire.

I have read and understand the above consent form, I certify that I am 18 years old or older and, by clicking the “agree” button to enter the survey, I indicate my willingness to voluntarily take part in the study.

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

### **Begin Survey**

What is the name you want to be identified as in the study? (This name should not reveal your true identity, to ensure confidentiality). \_\_\_\_\_

I identify as Black, African American, or of African Descent

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you do not identify with the above statement, how do you identify? \_\_\_\_\_

Where are you from (city/state)? \_\_\_\_\_

My age is:

☐ 18-23

☐ 24-29

☐ 30-35

☐ 36-41

☐ 42-47

☐ 48-53

☐ 54-59

☐ 60+

The below statement is most in line with how I identify:

☐ I consider myself religious

☐ I consider myself spiritual, and therefore not a follower of religious ideology

☐ I consider myself neither religious nor spiritual

What is your religion or spiritual beliefs? \_\_\_\_\_

The next set of questions will be used to obtain information about the institution. This section will only contain closed-ended survey items, to ensure the name or other uniquely identifiable characteristics about the institution are not disclosed to the researcher.

The institution, I plan on discussing my voluntary termination from, is considered a predominantly White institution?

☐ Yes

☐ No

This institution is considered:

☐ A public two year institution, community college, or junior college

☐ A private two year institution, community college, or junior college

- ☐ A public four year institution; liberal arts
- ☐ A private four year institution; liberal arts
- ☐ A public four year institution; research intensive
- ☐ A private four year institution; research intensive

The institution I ultimately left was in:

Northeast:

- ☐ New England (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, or Vermont)
- ☐ Mid-Atlantic (New Jersey, New York, or Pennsylvania)

Midwest:

- ☐ Eastern North Central (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, or Wisconsin)
- ☐ Western North Central (Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, or South Dakota)

South:

South Atlantic (Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington D.C., or West Virginia)

East South Central (Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, or Tennessee)

West South Central (Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, or Texas)

West:

Mountain (Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, or Wyoming)

Pacific (Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon, or Washington)

The institution is in a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ area.

- ☐ Rural
- ☐ Urban
- ☐ Suburban

The city was \_\_\_\_\_% White/Caucasian (Please take a moment to look this information up in a different browser window or using another device if you do not know the demographics of the city. Wikipedia can be used to find this information.)

☐ 90-99.9%

☐ 80-89%

☐ 70-79%

☐ 60-69%

☐ 50-59%

☐ 40-49%

☐ 30-39%

☐ 20-29%

☐ 10-19%

☐ 0.01-9%

The city was \_\_\_\_\_% Black/African American/African Decent (Please take a moment to look this information up in a different browser window or using another device if you do not know the demographics of the city. Wikipedia can be used to find this information.)

☐ 90-99.9%

☐ 80-89%

☐ 70-79%

☐ 60-69%

☐ 50-59%

☐ 40-49%

☐ 30-39%

☐ 20-29%

☐ 10-19%

\_ 0.01-9%

The institution was founded between the following years: (Please take a moment to look this information up in a different browser window or using another device if you do not know the founding year of the institution. Wikipedia or the institution's website can be used to find this information.)

_ 1636-1699	_ 1800-1809	_ 1910-1919
_ 1700-1709	_ 1810-1819	_ 1920-1929
_ 1710-1719	_ 1820-1829	_ 1930-1939
_ 1720-1729	_ 1830-1839	_ 1940-1949
_ 1730-1739	_ 1840-1849	_ 1950-1959
_ 1740-1749	_ 1850-1859	_ 1960-1969
_ 1750-1759	_ 1860-1869	_ 1970-1979
_ 1760-1769	_ 1870-1879	_ 1980-1989
_ 1770-1779	_ 1880-1889	_ 1990-1999
_ 1780-1789	_ 1890-1899	_ 2000-2010
_ 1790-1799	_ 1900-1909	_ 2010-

This is the conclusion of the items which will be utilized for research purposes. The following section will only be used as a tool to schedule the first phone interview.

Please provide a phone number you can be reached: \_\_\_\_\_

The first phone interview should be approximately 45 minutes. Please provide at least 3 dates and times you are available and willing to participant in the phone interview. (Please provide your answer in the following format 01/01/2015 at 1:00 pm).

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

### Semi-Structured Protocol for the First Phone Interview

Hello I am Jovaughn Barnard, a Ph.D. student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Does this time still work for you?

(At this point I will wait for the response before proceeding. If the time does not work, I will ask when will be a better time to call. If the time works for the participant, I will continue with the following script.)

Great, thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. As indicated on the survey you agree to have the phone interviews recorded (or not recorded), is that still indicative of your feelings today?

(Wait for participant's response)

Great I will now start the audio for the interview (or be prepared to take notes during this interview, if there are any pauses during the interview it may be because of my own note taking). As a reminder, please realize that you can skip any questions or terminate this study at any time without consequences. Another reminder is to ensure your own confidentiality and unique or identifiable makers. Do not provide details that will identify you or the institution in which you are referring to.

Thank you again for your participation, I will first give you some information about myself, how I decided on this topic, and then go over the importance of this study and your involvement.

I am 26 years old and have been working in higher education for over five years. I love working with students during their time of development and truly enjoyed working in an intellectually stimulating space a college and university can foster. I left the institution, I was working at largely because of the gendered racism I faced while there. I decided that I did not want to stay in an environment that did not connect to who I am and I deemed unhealthy. Upon leaving, I decided to change my dissertation topic to a topic which captures the experiences of Black women who contemplated and ultimately voluntarily terminated their employment from a predominantly white institution. These stories need to be heard and often depart the institution with us. To provide the academy with these stories and to potentially seek some level of empowerment and institutional change through discussing these experiences, your participation is truly valued and essential. I again want to thank you for your time and willingness to share your story.

This phone interview is to better get to know you. The second interview will be more about obtaining a better understanding of circumstances surrounding the job you ultimately decided to

leave. I will then follow up with the transcription of the two phone interviews via SurveyGizmo within a week or two. To ensure an accurate portrayal of recording, please read over the transcript and elaborate or clarify any information provided. After reviewing the transcription, please answer the reflective prompt question.

Are there any questions?

(I will answer the questions which are addressed or proceed if no questions are asked.)

We will now proceed to the prepared phone interview prompts and questions.

Tell me about yourself. You can take this time to discuss the social identities or labels you can be categorized by. How would you describe who you are?

(Participant's response)

Where are you from?

(Participant's response)

Where are your parents from?

(Participant's response)

In what ways, if any, did where you and/or your parents are from impact your decision to apply or accept a position at the institution you ultimately left?

(Participant's response)

My mother and father have different views in which they have shared with me as it pertains to working. What are some of the concepts your parents passed on to you about working or work ethic?

(Participant's response)

How do your own concepts about working or work ethic differ from those passed on by your parents?

(Participant's response)

How did this impact you while contemplating leaving the institution you ultimately decided to leave?

(Participant's response)

What led you to applying for the job you ultimately decided to leave?



(Participant's response)

What led to you accepting the job?

(Participant's response)

This is the conclusion of the interview. Do you have anything we discussed that you want to elaborate on?

(Participant's response)

Do you have any questions at this time?

(Participant's response)

Is this a good time to schedule the second and final phone interview?

(Participant's response)

What times work best for you?

## Appendix D

### Semi-Structured Protocol for the Second Phone Interview

Hello, this is Jovaughn Barnard. Is this a good time to conduct the second and final phone interview?

(Wait for response before proceeding. If this is not a good time we will reschedule. If this time still works, I will continue with the following script.)

Great, thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. As indicated on the survey you agree to have the phone interviews recorded (or not recorded), is that still indicative of your feelings today?

(Wait for participant's response)

Great I will now start the audio for the interview (or be prepared to take notes during this interview, if there are any pauses during the interview it may be because of my own note taking). As a reminder, please realize that you can skip any questions or terminate this study at any time without consequences. Another reminder is to ensure your own confidentiality and unique or identifiable makers. Do not provide details that will identify you or the institution in which you are referring to.

Thank you again for your time. I have some specific questions which are geared at getting a deeper understanding of your experience and the circumstances at your former place of employment. Please provide me with an overview of what you believe contributed to you voluntarily terminating your employment from the predominantly White institution you were once employed at. Also please tell me what you believe could have contributed to you staying there.

(Participant's response)

Great thank you for your response, for the next set of questions I will read a part of chapter one of my dissertation to provide you with the proper definitions. After providing you with the definitions I will proceed with the corresponding question. If you need more clarification please do not hesitate to ask.

As currently stated on page 11, "For women working on predominantly White campuses, the physical work environment can be the architecture of the buildings, artifacts and statues on campus, the location of their office, and the furniture in their working space. Many elements of the physical work environment can impact how a person feels about a particular institution." Keeping what I just said in mind, what components, if any, of the physical work environment

contribute to an unhealthy workplace and contemplations of leaving? What components, if any, of the physical work environment could have contributed to your retention?

(Participant's response)

A quote from page 85 of Burton's 2010 piece written for WHO, she states that "the organization of work and the organizational culture; the attitudes, values, beliefs and practices that are demonstrated on a daily bases in the enterprise /organization, and which affect the mental and physical well-being of employees." To help to clarify the concept of enterprise and organization, currently on page 11 of the dissertation I wrote the following. "This can include the policy and practices on a particular campus as well as the unspoken rules and office culture embedded in the workplace." Keeping that in mind, what components, if any, of the psychosocial work environment contribute to an unhealthy workplace and contemplations of leaving? What components, if any, of the psychosocial work environment could have contributed to your retention?

(Participant's response)

The following quotation is also currently stated on page 11 for clarification purposes to define personal health resources in the workplace. "This includes how supportive the environment is and may encompass the "health services, information, resources, opportunities and flexibility an enterprise provides to workers to support or motivate their efforts to improve or maintain healthy personal lifestyle practices, as well as to monitor and support their ongoing physical and mental health" (Burton, 2010, p. 86). Black women in the academy may view such resources as positively or negatively contributing to their physical and mental health, as well as spiritual and cultural enrichment." Keeping this in mind, what components, if any, of the personal health resources contribute to an unhealthy workplace and contemplations of leaving? What components, if any, of the personal health resources could have contributed to your retention?

(Participant's response)

To provide an understanding of what enterprises mean, the following is currently stated on pages 11 and 12 of the dissertation. According to Burton, "Enterprises exist in communities, affect and are affected by those communities. Since workers live in the communities, their health is affected by the community physical and social environment." To further clarify this point, I wrote that, "this can help to provide more insight into the circumstances and ideologies in the surrounding community which can also influence Black women to leave or contemplate leaving a PWI." Keeping this in mind, what components, if any, of the enterprise community involvement contribute to an unhealthy workplace and contemplations of leaving? What components, if any, of the enterprise community involvement could have contributed to your retention?

(Participant's response)

As a Black woman, what were your perceptions of the surrounding town or area outside of the university?

(Participant's response)

Thank you for your responses, the next questions will not have a descriptive prompt.

How long was the contemplation phase, in other words how long did it take from when you decided that you had to leave to you actually leaving?

(Participant's response)

To what degree, if any, was leaving your institution a challenging ordeal?

(Participant's response)

Thank you again for your responses, those are all the questions I have for you, do you have any questions for me?

(I will address the participant's questions if she has any, if not I will proceed to the following statement.)

Great, I will provide the transcription of the two phone interviews within two weeks. At that time you will review the transcripts and see if you want to change or elaborate any areas of the interview. You will also provide a written statement on how the interviewing experience has impacted your conceptualization of the circumstances surrounding the institution you ultimately left. This is something you can think about after we hang up and continue to reflect on during the next two weeks. Thank you again for your time, have a great rest of your day.

## Appendix E

### Reflective Prompt

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1977659/Reflective-Prompt-and-Transcription-Review>

#### Page 1

Dear Participant,

I want to thank you for providing the information we were able to discuss during the two phone interviews. Your participation in this study is highly valued, and I truly appreciate you taking the time to share your story and understandings. The transcriptions of the two phone interviews are represented on page 2 and 4 of this survey. Please take some time to review the transcriptions and use track changes or any other way that clearly demonstrates where you want to make changes or additions. After reviewing the transcripts and making any changes or elaborations, please answer this last reflective question.

My reflection on my own circumstances and the factors which contributed to who I am as a person today in part due to what I have endured was significantly impacted through conducting this study. I learned a lot about myself and the circumstances surrounding my voluntary termination through hearing your story. What ways, if any, have you expanded, through your participation in this study, as it pertains to your understanding of yourself and/or the circumstances you faced while at your previous work environment?

Please respond to this question, the way you deem appropriate. This can include utilizing your creativity. Please do respond as soon as possible to allow completion of the data collection component of the study.

It is with sincerity that I thank you again for your participation,

Jovaughn Barnard

#### Page 2

Phone Interview 1 Transcription

[Interview Transcription will be provided]

Please use the space below if you have an area of the interview you want to change or elaborate on. If there are multiple areas you want to make changes please consider copying and pasting the transcription, making the changes, and uploading the saved document on the next page. If no changes are need please type N/A.

[Text Box]

### **Page 3**

Optional Upload

Please upload completed transcription review below:

[Browse]

[Upload]

### **Page 4**

Phone Interview 2 Transcription

[Interview Transcription will be provided]

Please use the space below if you have an area of the interview you want to change or elaborate on. If there are multiple areas you want to make changes please consider copying and pasting the transcription, making the changes, and uploading the saved document on the next page. If no changes are need please type N/A.

[Text Box]

### **Page 5**

Optional Upload

Please upload completed transcription review below:

[Browse]

[Upload]

### **Page 6**

Reflective Prompt

What ways, if any, have you expanded, through your participation in this study, as it pertains to your understanding of yourself and/or the circumstances you faced while at your previous work environment? Please respond to this question, the way you deem appropriate in the space provided below:

[Text Box]

**Page 7**

Thank you!

Thank you again for your participation in this study.